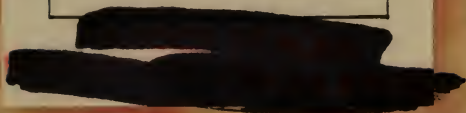






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A G I N C O U R T.



VOL. II.

AGINCOURT.

A ROMANCE.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "DE L'ORME," "ARABELLA STUART,"
"ROSE D'ALBRET," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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AGINCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

THE PILGRIM.

ONE morning, while the events which I have lately detailed were passing in the city of London, a man in a long brown gown, with a staff in his hand, a cross upon his shoulder, and a cockle shell in his hat, walked slowly and apparently wearily, into the little village of Abbots Ann, and sat himself down on a stone bench before the reeve's door.

Recognising the pilgrim from some far distant land as she looked out of her casement window, the good dame, with the charitable spirit of the age, took him forth some broken victuals, and a cup of ale, and en-

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quired what news he brought from over sea. The wanderer, however, seemed more inclined to ask than answer questions; and was apparently full of wonder and amazement at the tragic story, which he had just heard, he said, of the death of the Lady Catherine Beauchamp. He prayed the good woman, for love and for charity's sake, to tell him all about it; and she, very willing to gratify him; for every country gossip gains dignity while telling a horrible tale; began at the beginning of the affair, as far as she knew it, and related how, just on the night after the last Glutton mass, as Childe Richard, of Woodville, their lord's nephew, was riding down the road with a friend, he heard a shriek, and, on hurrying to the water, found the body of the poor young lady floating down the stream; how the two gentlemen bore her to the chanter's cottage; and how marks were found upon her person, which seemed to prove that she had come to her death by unfair means.

“And has the murderer been discovered, sister?” enquired the old pilgrim.

“Alas! no,” replied the reeve's wife; “there

have been whispers about, but nothing certain."

"Ay, murder will out, sooner or later," answered the pilgrim. "And whom did the whispers point at?"

"Nay," replied dame Julian, "I know not that I ought to say; but, to a reverend man like you, who have visited the shrine of St. James, there can be no harm in speaking of these things, especially as we all know that the whispers are false. Well, then—but you must tell nobody what I say—the lady's own lover—husband indeed I might call him, for they were betrothed by holy church—has been accused of having done the deed; but every one who knows Sir Harry Dacre, is right sure that he would have sooner cut off both his hands; and besides, the miller of Clatford Mill told me—'twas but yesterday morning—that, half an hour before sunset on that very day when all this happened, he saw Sir Harry at his own place, and opened the gate for him to go through. He remembered it, he said, because the knight had torn his hand with a nail in the gate, by trying to

open it without dismounting; and as soon as he was through, he rode on towards Wey Hill, which is quite away from here."

"Might he not have come back again by some other road?" asked the pilgrim.

"No," answered dame Julian, "not without going four miles round; and besides, the miller told me, that his man Job saw the knight, half an hour after, at the top of Wey Hill, halting his horse, and gazing at the sun setting. Now that's a good way off, and this deed was done just after close of day."

"Then that clears him," replied the pilgrim; "but is there no one else suspected?"

The good woman shook her head; and he added—"Was nobody seen about here, who might have had cause to wish the lady ill?"

"None," said dame Julian, with a low laugh, "but one who might perhaps wish her dead; for he got all her wealth, which was prodigious they say."

"Ay, was he seen about then?" demanded the pilgrim; "there might be suspicion, there."

"Why," said the reeve's wife, "he was stay-

ing up at the hall, and passed homeward about three. It might be a little later, but not much. What became of him afterwards I do not know; and yet, now I think of it, he must have remained in the place some time, for he was seen an hour after or more, by a girl, who asked me who he was."

"'Tis a wonder she did not know him," said the pilgrim, "if she lives in this place."

"But that she does not," answered dame Julian. "She dwells a good way off, and was here by chance."

"Ay, 'tis a sad tale indeed," rejoined her companion; "but I must go, good dame. Gramercy for your bounty. But tell me, I saw an abbey as I came along; have they any famous relics there?"

"Ay, that have they," rejoined the reeve's wife, with a look of pride. "Our abbey is as rich in relics as any other in England;" and she began an enumeration of all the valuable things that it contained; amongst which the objects that she seemed to set the greatest store by, was a finger of St. Luke the Evan-

gelist, the veil of the blessed Virgin, and one of the ribs of St. Ursula.

The pilgrim declared, that he must positively go and visit them, as he never passed any holy relics without sanctifying himself by their touch.

He accordingly took his way towards the abbey direct, and visited, and prayed at the several shrines which the church contained, having secured the company and guidance of one of the monks, who were always extremely civil and kind to pilgrims and palmers, when they did not come exactly in the guise of beggars. The present pilgrim was of a very different quality; and he completely won the good graces and admiration of the attendant monk, not so much indeed by the devotion with which he told his beads, and repeated his prayers, as by his generosity in laying down a large piece of silver before the rib of St. Ursula, another at the shrine of St. Luke, and a small piece of gold opposite to the veil of the blessed Virgin.

Having thus prepared the way, the stranger

proceeded to open a conversation with the monk, somewhat similar to that which he had held with dame Julian, the reeve's wife; and now a torrent of information flowed in upon him; for his companion had been one of the brethren who accompanied the abbot to the cottage whither the body of Catherine Beauchamp had been carried. The tale, however, though told with much loquacity, furnished but few particulars beyond those which the pilgrim had already gained; for the monk appeared a meek, good man, who took everything as he found it, and deduced but little from anything that he heard. All that he knew, indeed, he was ready to tell; but he had neither readiness nor penetration sufficient to gather much information, or to sift the corn from the chaff.

The pilgrim seemed somewhat disappointed, for he was certainly anxious to hear more; and he was on the eve of leaving the church unsatisfied, when he beheld another monk pacing the opposite aisle, with a grave, and even dull, air. He was an old man, with a short, thin, white beard, and heavy features, which, till one

examined closely, gave an expression of stupidity to his whole countenance, only relieved by the small elephant-like eye, which sparkled brightly under its shaggy eyebrow.

“What brother is that?” demanded the pilgrim, looking across the church.

“Oh, that is brother Martin,” replied the monk; “a dull and silent man, from whom you will get nothing. He is skilled in drugs and medicines, it is true. His cell is like an alchemist’s shop; but we all think he must have committed some great sin in days of old, for half his time is spent in prayers and penances, and the other half in distilling liquors, or roasting lumps of clay, and other stuffs, in crucibles and furnaces. ’Tis rather hard, the lord abbot favours him so much, and has granted him two cells, the best in the whole monastery, to follow these vain studies, which, in my mind, come near to magic and sorcery. I saw him once with my own eyes make a piece of paper, cut in the shape of a man, dance upright, as if it had life.”

“I will speak to him,” said the pilgrim, “and

will soon let you know if there be anything forbidden in his studies ; for I have been in lands full of witches and sorcerers, and have learnt to discover them in an instant."

"'T is a marvel if he answers you at all," replied the monk ; "for he's as silent as a frog ; but, I pray you, let me hear what you think of him."

"Ay, that I will," rejoined the stranger ; "but you must keep away while we talk together, lest the presence of another might close his lips. I will seek you out afterwards, brother ; I think your name is Clement, so the porter told me ?"

"The same, the same," replied the monk. "I will go to the refectory ;" but, before he went, he paused for a minute or two, and watched the pilgrim crossing the nave and addressing brother Martin. At first he seemed to receive no answer, but a monosyllable. The next instant, however, much to his surprise, Clement saw the silent brother turn round, gaze intently upon the pilgrim's face, and then enter into an eager conversation with him. What was the subject of which they spoke he could not di-

vine, or rather, what was the secret by which the pilgrim had contrived to break the charmed taciturnity of silent brother Martin; and his curiosity was so much excited, that he thought fit to cross over also, though with a slow and solemn step, in order to benefit by this rare accident. The small, clear, grey eye of brother Martin, however, caught Clement's movements in a moment, and laying his hand upon the sleeve of the pilgrim's gown, he led him with a quick step through a small side door, that opened into the cloister, and thence to his own cell, leaving the inquisitive monk, who did not choose to discompose his dignity, or shake his fat sides by rapid motion, behind them in the church.

What turn their communications took, and whether the pilgrim discovered or not that brother Martin was addicted to the black art, Clement never learned; for the faithless visitor of the abbey totally forgot to fulfil his promise; and when, at the end of about two hours, he took his departure, it was by the back door leading from the cloister over the fields. The

high road was at no great distance, and along it he trudged with a much more light and active step than that which had borne him into the village on his first appearance; so that had good Dame Julian, the reeve's wife, seen him as he went back, she might have been inclined to think that brother Martin had employed upon him some magical device, to change age into youth.

About half a mile from Andover, the pilgrim turned a little from the road, and, sitting down in a neighbouring field, took out of his wallet a large kerchief, and an ordinary hood,—then stripped off his brown gown and hat, laying them deliberately in the kerchief, and next divested himself of a quantity of white hair, which left him with a shock head of a lightish brown hue, a short tabard of blue cloth, a stout pair of riding boots, and a dagger at his girdle.

“So ends my pilgrimage!” said Ned Dyram, as he packed up his disguise in the napkin; “and, by my faith, I have brought home my wallet well stored. Out upon it!—am I to

labour thus always for others? No, by my faith! I will at least keep some of the crusts I have got for myself; and if others want them they must pay for them. Let me see;—we will divide them fairly. Dame Julian and brother Clement in one lot; brother Martin in the other. That will do; and if aught be said about it hereafter, I will speak the truth, and avow that, had I been paid, I would have spoken. Alchemy is a great thing;—without its aid I could never have transmuted brother Martin's leaden silence into such golden loquacity. Why, I have taught the old man more in an hour than he has learned in his life before; and he has given wheat for rye; so that we are even."

With these sage reflections, Ned Dyram put his packet under his arm and walked on to Andover—where, at a little hostelry by the side of the river, he paused and called for his horse, which was soon brought. A cup of ale sufficed him for refreshment; and after he had drained it to the dregs, he trotted off upon the road to London, still meditating over all that

he had learned at Abbots Ann and Dunbury Abbey, and somewhat hesitating as to the course which he had to pursue.

It would afford little either of instruction or amusement, were I to trace all the reflections of a cunning but wayward mind — for such was that of Edward Dyrham. Naturally possessed of considerable abilities, quick in acquirement, retentive in memory, keen, observing, dexterous, he might have risen to wealth, and perhaps distinction; for his were not talents of that kind which led some of the best scholars of that day to beg from door to door, with a certificate of their profound science from the chancellors of their universities, but of a much more serviceable and worldly kind. A certain degree of waywardness of mind and inconstancy of disposition — often approaching that touch of insanity, which affected, or was affected by, those wise men the court fools of almost all epochs—and an unscrupulousness in matters of principle, which left his conduct often in very doubtful balance between honesty and knavery,

had barred his advancement in all the many walks he had tried. He had strong, and even ungovernable animal impulses also, which had more than once led him into situations of difficulty, and between which and his natural ambition, there was the same struggle that frequently took place between his good sense and his folly. He laboured hard, not perhaps to govern his passions, but rather to keep their gratification within safe limits; and he felt a sort of ill-will towards himself when they overcame him, which generated a cynical bitterness towards others. That bitterness was also increased by a consciousness of not having succeeded in any course as much as the talents he knew himself to possess might have ensured; but it must not be supposed for one moment that Ned Dyrham ever attributed the failure of his efforts for advancement to himself. The injustice or folly of others, he thought, or the concurrence of untoward circumstances, had alone kept him in an inferior situation. Though the King, on his accession to the throne, had extended to him greater

favour than to any other of those who had participated in the wild exploits of his youth, simply because Ned Dyram had never prompted or led in any unjustifiable act, and had not withheld the bitterness of his tongue even from the youthful follies of the Prince, yet he felt a rankling disappointment at not having been promoted and honoured, without ever suspecting that Henry might have seen in him faults or failings that would have rendered him a more dangerous servant to a sovereign than to a private individual. Yet such was the case; for that great prince's eyes were clear-sighted and keen; and though he had not troubled himself to study all the intricacies of the man's character, he had perceived many qualities which he believed might be amended by mingling with the world in an inferior station, but which unfitted the possessor at the time for close attendance upon a monarch.

Ned Dyram, however, though affecting that bluntness which is so often mistaken for sincerity, was not without sufficient pliancy to

conceal his mortification, and to perform eagerly whatever task the King imposed upon him. I do not say, indeed, that he proposed to perform it well, unless it suited his own views and wishes. He did the monarch's bidding with alacrity, because on that he thought his future fortune might depend; but he did not make up his mind to ensure success by diligence, activity, and zeal—satisfying himself by saying, that “the result must ever depend upon circumstances;” and one of those circumstances was always, in this case, Ned Dyrham's own good will.

He had some hesitation, however, and some fear; for there was but one man in England whose displeasure he dreaded, and that man was the King. But yet I would not imply that it was his power he feared alone: he feared offending the man rather than the monarch, for Henry had acquired over him that influence which can be obtained only by a great and superior mind over one less large and comprehensive. It was the majesty of that great prince's intellect of which he stood in

awe, not the splendour of his throne ; and perhaps he might have yielded to the impression in the present instance, and done all that he ought to have done, had he not perceived too clearly the feelings which prompted him to do so ; for as soon as he was conscious that dread of the King was operating to drive him in a certain direction, the dogged perversity of his nature rose up and dragged him to the contrary side. He called himself “a cowed hound ;” and, with all the obstinate vanity of a wrong-headed man, he resolved to prove to himself that he had no fear, by acting in direct opposition to the dread of which he was conscious.

As the best way of conquering all scruples, he treated them lightly from that moment ; quickened his horse’s pace, stopped to sup and sleep about fifteen miles from London, and presented himself at the gates of the palace at an early hour next morning. There he was kept waiting for some time, as the King was at council ; but at length he was admitted to the monarch’s presence, and, in answer to

questions, which evidently showed that he had been sent into Hampshire, to collect information of a more definite character than had previously reached Henry's ears, in regard to the death of Catherine Beauchamp, he gave his sovereign at full all the tidings he had gained from Dame Julian, the reeve's wife, from brother Clement, and from two or three other persons whom he had seen before he met with those I have mentioned. Of brother Martin, however, he said not a word; and Henry mused for several minutes without observation.

"Well," he said at length, "refresh yourself and your horse, Ned; and then go back and join your new lord. Here is largess for your service, though I am sorry you have been able to gain no more clear intelligence;" and at the same moment he poured the contents of a mall leathern purse which had been lying on the table into his hand.

The amount was far larger than Ned Dyram had expected;—for Henry was one of the most open-handed men on earth—and he paused,

looked from the gold to the monarch, and seemed about to speak. At that moment, however, the door of the room opened, and a young gentleman entered in haste. By the stern and somewhat contracted, but high forehead — by the quick, keen eye, and by the compressed lips, Ned Dyram instantly recognised Prince John of Lancaster; and, at a sign from the king, he bowed low and quitted the presence.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW FRIENDS.

ELLA BRUNE sat on a stool at the feet of Mary Markham, on the day after Richard of Woodville's departure from London, and certainly a more beautiful contrast was seldom seen than between the fair lady and the minstrel girl, as the one told and the other listened to, the tale of the old man's death, and all that had since occurred. The eyes of both were full of tears, which did not run over, indeed, but hung trembling on the eyelid, like drops of summer dew in the cup of a flower; and Mary Markham, with the kind, familiar impulse of sympathy, stretched forth her fair hand twice, and pressed that of her less fortunate companion, as she told the tale of her sorrows, and her sufferings. The poor girl's heart yearned towards her gentle friend, as she remarked her sympathy for all

she felt,—her grief at the death of the poor old man, her pleasure at the conduct of Ella's generous protector, her indignation at the persecution she had suffered from a man whom she herself scorned and despised. But one thing is to be remarked. The name of Sir Simeon of Roydon Ella spoke plainly, and repeated often, during her narrative; but that of Richard of Woodville, from some latent feeling in her own heart, she shrunk from pronouncing. It might be, that the meaning, looks, and smiles of the people of the inn where she had visited him, made her believe that others would entertain the suspicions or fancies which she imagined that those looks implied. It might be that she doubted her own heart, or that she knew there really were therein sensations which she dreaded to acknowledge to herself, and still more to expose to the eyes of others. Thus she gave him any other designation than his own name. She called him "the noble gentleman who had befriended her," "her protector," "her benefactor,"—everything, in short, but Richard of Woodville.

Mary Markham observed this reserve; and, as woman's heart, even in the most simple and single-minded, is always learned in woman's secrets, Mary judged, and judged rightly, that gratitude was growing up in Ella's bosom into love. She could very well understand that it should be so; she thought it natural, so natural, that it could scarce be otherwise; and what she felt within herself would have made her very lenient to passion in others, even had she been more harsh and severe than she was. She took a deep interest in the poor girl and her whole history, and not less in her grateful love than in any other part thereof; so that she was anxious to learn who and what this unnamed benefactor was, in order that she might judge whether there was the least hope or chance of Ella's tenderness meeting due return.

"He was a generous and noble-hearted knight, indeed," she said. "More like the ancient chivalry, my poor girl, than the heartless nobility of the present day."

"He is not a knight," answered Ella timidly;

“but I am sure he soon will be, for he well deserves his spurs.”

“And he is young and handsome, of course, Ella?” said Mary Markham, with a smile.

The minstrel girl coloured, but answered nothing, and Mary went on, saying, “but you must tell me his name, Ella; I would fain know who is this noble gentleman.”

Thus plainly asked, Ella Brune could not refuse to answer; and, bending down her bright eyes upon the ground, she said, “His name is Richard of Woodville, lady.”

She spoke in a tone so low, that the words might have been inaudible to any other ear but that of Mary Markham. The well-known sound, however, was instantly caught by her, producing emotions in her heart such as she had never felt before. Her very breath seemed stopped; her bosom fluttered, as if there had been a caged bird within; her cheek turned very pale, and then flushed warm again with the blood spreading in a brighter glow over her fair forehead and her blue-veined temples. Hers was not indeed a jealous disposition; her nature was

too generous and frank to be suspicious or distrustful; but it is difficult for any woman's ear to hear, that he to whom her whole affections are given is loved by another, and her heart not beat with emotions far from pleasurable.

Yet Mary schooled herself for what she felt—for the slight touch of doubt towards Woodville, and of anger towards Ella, which crossed her bosom for a moment. "It is not his fault," she thought, "if the girl loves him; nor hers either, to love him for acts of generous kindness. She is no more to blame for such feelings than myself; the same high qualities that won my regard might well gain hers. He is too noble, too—too true and faithful to trifle with her, or to forget me. Yet, would this had not happened!—It is strange, too, that he did not mention all this to me!"

But then she remembered, how every hour he had spent with her had passed, how little time they had found to say all that two warm and tender hearts could prompt; how often they had been interrupted in the half-finished tale of love; how constantly it had been

renewed whenever they were alone ; and then she thought it not extraordinary at all, that he had spoken of nothing else.

Such thoughts, however, kept her mute, with her eyes gazing on the tapestry at the other side of the room ; and she saw not that Ella, surprised at her silence, had now raised her look, and was reading in the countenance—with the skill which peril and misfortune soon acquire in this hard world—all that was passing in the heart beneath. The poor girl's face was very pale, for she had her emotions too ; but yet she was calmer than Mary Markham ; for one of the chief sources of agitation was wanting in her bosom. She was without hope. She might love, but it was love with no expectation. The future, which to Mary's eyes, was like the garden of the Hesperides, all hanging with golden fruit, was a desert to poor Ella Brune. She had no fear, because she had no hope. She had no doubts, because she had no trust. She was externally calm, for though there were painful sensations, there was no internal contention. She, therefore, it was who spoke first.

“You know him, lady,” she said, in a sweet, gentle, humble tone; “and, if you know him, you love him.”

“I do know him,” answered Mary Markham, with a trembling voice and glowing cheek. “I have known him well for years.”

She paused there; but the moment after, she thought, with that generous confidence so often misplaced, but which was not so in this instance, “It were better to tell her all, for her sake and for mine. If she be good and virtuous, as I think, it cannot but lead to good to let her know the whole truth.”

“Ay, Ella,” she continued aloud, “and you are right. I do love him, and he loves me. We have plighted our faith to each other, and wait but the consent of others to be more happy than we are.”

A tear trembled in the eye of Ella Brune; but what were the thoughts that flashed like lightning through her mind? “The lady loves him, and she sees I love him too.—Jealousy is a strange thing, and a sad pang!—She may doubt him, even with such a friendless being as

I am—I will sweep that doubt away ;” and with a resigned, but gentle smile, looking in Mary’s face, she said, “ I was sure of it.”

“ Of what, Ella ?” asked Mary Markham, with some surprise.

“ That he loved some one, and was beloved again,” replied the poor girl ; and she repeated “ I was sure of it.”

“ What could make you sure ?” asked the lady, gazing at her with a less embarrassed look. “ He did not tell you, did he ?”

“ Oh, no,” answered Ella Brune. “ All he told me was, that he was going afar to Burgundy, and that as he could not give me any further protection himself, he would send one of his men to enquire after me, that he might hear I was safe, and as happy as fate would let me be, but—” and she paused, as if she doubted whether to proceed or not.

“ But what, Ella ?” demanded Mary.

“ Why, I was foolish, lady,” said the girl ; “ and perhaps you may think me wrong too, and bold. But when I heard that he was going to Burgundy, I cried, ‘ Oh, that I were going with

you!’ And I told him that I had kinsfolk both in Liege and in Peronne; and then I knew by his look, and what he said, that there was some lady whom he loved, and who loved him.”

“How did that enlighten you?” enquired Mary Markham. “Did he refuse you?—That were not courteous, I think.”

“No, he did not actually refuse,” answered Ella Brune, “but he said, that it might hardly be; and I saw, he thought that his lady might be jealous—might suspect—”

Mary Markham put her hand on Ella’s, with a warm smile, and said, “I will neither suspect him, nor be jealous of you, Ella—though perhaps I might have been,” she added, “yes, perhaps I might, if I had heard you were with him, and I had not known why.—Yet I should have been very wrong.—Out upon such doubts! I say, if they can prevent a true-hearted gentleman from doing an act of kindness to a poor girl in her need, lest a jealous heart should suspect him. But I will write to him, Ella: and yet it is now in vain; for he has left Westminster.”

Ella gazed at her, smiling. “We know not

our own hearts," she said; "and, perhaps, dear lady, you might be jealous yet."

"No, no!" cried Mary, with one of her own joyous laughs again. "Never, now. I am of a confiding nature, my poor girl; and I soon conquer those bitter enemies of peace, called doubts."

Ella Brune gazed round the room. "If I had some instrument, I could sing to you on that theme," she said.

"Nay, you can sing without, Ella," replied the lady. "I have none here, alas!"

"Well, I will sing it then," answered Ella Brune; "'tis an old ditty, and a simple one;" and, leaning her hand on Mary Markham's knee, she sang—

SONG.

"Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!
'Tis a shield of seven-fold steel.
Cares and sorrows come they must;
But sharper far, is doubt to feel.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!

"If deceit must vex the heart,—
Who can pass through life without?—
Better far to bear the smart
Than to grind the soul with doubt.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!

“Trust the lover, trust the friend.
Heed not what old rhymers tell.
Trust to God ; and in the end
Doubt not all will still be well.
Trust ! trust ! sweet lady, trust !

“Love’s best guide, and friendship’s stay—
Trust, to innocence was given ;
’Tis doubt that paves the downward way,
But trust unlocks the gates of heaven.
Trust ! trust ! sweet lady, trust !”

“And so I will, Ella,” cried the lady ; “so have I ever done, and will do still ; but methinks you have made the song to suit my ear.”

“Nay, in truth, dear lady, it is an ancient one,” replied Ella Brune ; but ere she could add more, old Sir Philip Beauchamp strode into the room, with an air hurried yet not dissatisfied.

“I have seen the King, Mary,” he said ; “and, on my life, he is a noble youth—right kingly in his port and in his words. His brother John, who won his spurs under my pennon when but a boy, soon got me speech of him ; and you are to go with me at once to his presence, pretty maid.—Nay, do not look downcast ; he is no frightful tyrant, but a man

that lady's eyes may look upon well pleased ; and 'tis needful for your safety you should go."

"Must she go alone, dear knight?" asked Mary Markham, with kind consideration for the girl's fears.

"Alone ! no ; I am to go with her, to be sure," answered Sir Philip. "How, my fair Mary, you would fain go visit Henry too !—What would Richard of Woodville say ?"

"He would trust," answered Mary Markham, giving a gay look to Ella. "However, I seek not to go, noble sir ; but it would be better, for this poor girl to have my maid, Maude, with her—for decency's sake," she continued, in a laughing tone ; "you old knights are sometimes too light and gallant ; and I must protect her from your courteous speeches by the way. Come with me, Ella ; I have a cloak in my chamber, that will suit well with your hood, and cover you all, so that nothing will be seen but the edge of your wimple. Then will you and Sir Philip escape scandal, if you both walk softly and look demure, while Maude trips along beside you."

Though Mary Markham said no word of the minstrel girl's attire, and did not even glance her eye to the gold fringe upon her gown, yet Ella understood, and was thankful for, her kind care, and mentally promised herself, that, before that day was out, she would provide herself with plainer weeds. In less than five minutes she and the maid were ready to depart; and, accompanied by Sir Philip, they soon crossed the open ground before the abbey and the sanctuary, and entered the gates of the palace yard. At the private door of the royal residence they received immediate admission; for a page was waiting Sir Philip's return; but he led them, not to the small chamber where Henry had received Ned Dyrham in the morning, and Sir Philip shortly after. Following, on the contrary, the larger staircase, the boy conducted the little party to a hall, then used as an audience chamber; and when they entered, they at once perceived the King at the farther end, surrounded by a gay and glittering throng, and listening, apparently with deep attention, to an old man, dressed as a prelate

of the Church, who, with slow and measured accents, was delivering what seemed a somewhat long oration. Whatever was the subject on which he spoke, it seemed to be one of much interest; for, ever and anon, the King bowed his head with a grave, approving motion, and a murmur of satisfaction rose from those around.

Slowly and quietly the old knight and his companions drew near, and then found that the good bishop was arguing the King's title, not alone to the Duchies of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Anjou, which undoubtedly belonged of right to the English Crown, but also to the whole of France, which as certainly belonged to another. Sir Philip Beauchamp marked well the Monarch's countenance as he listened, and perceived that, when the subject was the recovery of those territories which had descended to the race of Plantagenet from William the Conqueror, Fulke of Anjou, and Eleanor of Aquitaine, one of those grave inclinations of the head which marked his approbation followed; but that, when the claim to all France

was considered, Henry paused, and seemed to meditate more on thoughts suggested by his own mind than on the mere words that struck his ear. The surrounding nobles, however, applauded all; and bright and beaming eyes were turned upon the prelate when he concluded his oration with the words—strange ones, indeed, in the mouth of a Christian bishop: “Wherefore, Oh my Lord, the King! advance your banner, fight for your right, conquer your inheritance; spare not sword, blood, or fire; for your war is just, your cause is good, your claim is true!”*

“Many thanks, my good lord,” replied the King; “we will with our council consider duly what you have advanced; and we beseech you to pray God on our behalf, that we be advised wisely. Pity it were indeed to shed Christian blood without due cause; and, therefore, we shall first fairly and courteously require of our cousin, the restitution of those territories undeniably appertaining to our crown; with the which we may content ourselves, if granted

* The recorded words of Henry Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury.

frankly ; but if they be refused, a greater claim may perchance grow out of the denial of the smaller one ; and, at all events, we shall know how, with the sword, to do ourselves right when driven to draw it. We will then beseech farther communion with you on these weighty matters, and, for the present, thank you much."

The bishop retired from the spot immediately facing the King ; and Henry's eye lighting on Sir Philip Beauchamp, he bowed his head to him, saying, " Advance, my noble friend.—Ha ! you have brought the girl with you, as I said ;" and his look fixed upon the countenance of poor Ella Brune, with a calm and scrutinizing gaze, not altogether free from wonder and admiration, to see such delicate beauty in one of her degree, but without a touch of that coarse and gloating expression, which had offended her in the stare of Sir Simeon Roydon.

" Is the knight I sent for, here ?" demanded the King, turning towards the page.

" Not yet, Sire," answered the boy.

" Well, then," said Henry, " though it is but fair that a man accused should hear the charge

against him, we must proceed; and you lords will witness what this young woman says, that it may be repeated to him hereafter.—Now, maiden, what is this which the worthy knight, Sir Philip Beauchamp, has reported concerning you and Sir Simeon of Roydon?”

To say that Ella Brune was not somewhat abashed would be false; for she did feel that she was in the presence of the most powerful King, and the most chivalrous court in Europe; she did feel that all eyes were turned upon her, every ear bent to catch her words. But there were truth and innocence at her heart, the strongest of all supports; there was the sense of having been wronged also; and, perhaps, some feeling of scorn rather than shame was roused by the light smiles and busy whisper that ran round the lordly circle before which she stood; for there is nothing so contemptible in the eyes, even of the humble, if they be wise and firm of heart, as the light and causeless, but oppressive sneer of pride—whether that pride be based in station, fortune, courtliness, or aught else on earth; for the true nobility of mind, which

sometimes impresses even pride with a faint mark of its own dignity, never treads upon the humble.

Henry, however, heard the buzz, and felt offended at the light looks he saw. "My lords!" he said in a tone of surprise and displeasure; "I beseech you, my good uncle of Exeter, warn those gentlemen of that which the King would not speak harshly. This is no jesting matter. Wrong has been done—I may say almost in our presence, so near has it been to our palace gates; and, by the Queen of Heaven, such things shall not escape punishment, while I wear the crown or bear the sword. When I am powerless to defend the meanest of my subjects, may death give my sceptre to more mighty hands; when I am unwilling to do justice to any in the land, may my enemies take from me the power I have borne unworthily.—Go on with your tale, maiden."

Ella Brune obeyed the King's order with a voice that faltered at first, but the rich sweet tone of which soon called the attention of all to what she said; and, taking up her story

from the beginning, she related the death of her old companion, the interview which she had first had with Sir Simeon of Roydon, and the violent manner in which she had been carried off, as she was returning to the hostelry where she lodged. As she spoke she gained confidence; and though, ere she had proceeded far, the base knight himself entered the presence, and placed himself exactly opposite to her, glaring at her with fierce and menacing eyes, her tongue faltered no more; and she went on to speak of her second interview with him, telling how she had forced back the lock of the door with her dagger—how the servants of the knight had not ventured to seize her, under the belief that the weapon was poisoned—and how she had dropped from the great window at the end of the corridor into the lane below.

As soon as she had done, Roydon stepped forward, as if to reply; but old Sir Philip Beauchamp, who stood by Ella's side to give her support, waved his hand, saying, "Silence, boy! till all be said against you—then speak if you list. As far as the carrying off of this

poor little maid is concerned, a good woman of the neighbourhood saw the deed done, and can bear witness respecting it, if farther testimony is required. I saw the manner of her escape as she has told it, and knocked down one of this knight's knaves just as he clutched her. So far her story is confirmed. What passed between him and her in private, they only know ; but I would take her word against his in any town ; for I know him to be a wondrous liar."

A laugh ran round the royal circle ; and Sir Simeon of Roydon put his hand to his dagger ; but the King turned towards him, saying, " Now sir, have you aught to answer ? — Is this story true or false ? "

" Somewhat mixed, Sire," answered Simeon of Roydon, with a sneer upon his lip. The young woman is rather fanciful. I will own that because she has a pretty face, as you may see, and bright eyes, and a small foot, and rounded ankle, she pleased my fancy ; and, although of somewhat low degree for such an honour, I thought to make her my paramour for a time, as many another man might do.

Minstrel girls and tombesteres are not generally famed for chastity ; and, by my faith ! I thought I showed her favour when I told my servants to find her out and bring her to my lodging. If they used any violence, 'twas not my fault, for I bade them treat her gently ; and as to her confinement at my house, that is pure fancy—she might have gone wherever she chose.”

“ ’Tis strange, then,” said the King, with a scornful smile, “ that she should take such means of going. People do not usually leap out of a window, when they can walk through a door.”

“ What made you bellow after her, like a wild bull ? ” demanded Sir Philip Beauchamp : turning to the culprit : “ I heard you with my ears, and so did many more, shout to your knaves to follow her, lest she should to the King. I know your voice right well, sir knight, and will vouch for its sweet sounds ! ”

“ Doting fool ! ” murmured Simeon of Roydon.

“ Doting ! ” cried the old knight, “ take care you don’t feel my gauntlet in your face, lest

I send you home as toothless as I sent your serviceable man. You will find that there is strength enough left to crush such a worm as you."

"Silence, Sir Philip!" said the King. "Sir Simeon of Roydon, according to your own account, you have committed an offence for which, if it had been done within the gates of our good city of London, the sober citizens would, methinks, have set you on a horse's back, with your face to the tail, and marched you in no pleasant procession. But, I must add, I do not believe your account; it seems to me to bear no character of truth about it. Yet, that you may not stand upon my judgment alone, if there be one of these good lords here present, who will say they do, upon their honour, believe that this poor maiden speaks falsely, and you tell the simple truth, you shall go free. What say you, lords—is the girl true, or he?"

"The girl!—the girl!" cried all the voices round.

"However men may love leaping," said John

of Lancaster, "they seek not to break their necks by springing from a window, when they can help it."

"Well, then," continued Henry, "you must carry your amorous violence to other lands, Sir Simeon of Roydon. You have committed a discourteous and unknightly act, and must give us time to forget it. We will not touch you in person or in purse, in goods or lands; but we banish you for two years from the realm of England. Bestow yourself where you will, but be not found within these shores after one month from this day, which space we give you to prepare. Is this a just award, my lords?"

The gentlemen round bowed their heads; and Henry, turning to the good old knight, added, with a gracious smile, "I thank you much, Sir Philip Beauchamp, for bringing this matter to my knowledge. These are deeds that I am resolved to check, with all the power that God entrusts to me."

"Heaven bless your Grace, and ever send us such a King!" replied the old knight; and,

taking Ella by the hand, with a lowly reverence to the monarch, he led her from the hall.

Henry, it would seem, dismissed his court at once; for before the minstrel girl and her companion had reached the bottom of the stairs, they were surrounded by several of the younger nobles, who were all somewhat eager to say soft and flattering things to the fair object of the day's interest, notwithstanding some rough reproof from good Sir Philip Beauchamp. But as he and his young charge were passing out with Mary Markham's maiden, a low deep voice whispered in Ella's ear, "I swear, by Christ's sepulchre, I will have revenge!"—and the next moment Sir Simeon of Roydon passed them, mounted his horse in the palace-yard, and rode furiously away.

CHAPTER III.

THE PREPARATION.

It was late in the evening of the same day of which we have just been speaking, when Ella Brune returned to her hostelry. She had gone back to thank fair Mary Markham for her kindness, intending only to stay for a few moments; but her new friend detained her till the sun was near his setting, and then only let her depart under the escort of Hugh of Clatford and another yeoman, after extracting a promise from her that she would return on the following morning, after the sad ceremony of her grandsire's funeral was over. And now Ella sat in her lonely little chamber, with the tears filling her bright eyes, which seemed fixed upon a spot of sunshine on the opposite wall of the court,

but, in reality, saw nothing, or, at least, conveyed no impression to the mind. Why was it Ella wept? To say truth, Ella herself could not, or would not tell. It was, perhaps, the crowding upon her of many sad sensations, the torrent swelled by many smaller rills, which caused those tears; and yet there was one predominant feeling—one that she wished not to acknowledge even to her own heart. What can I call it? How shall I explain it? It was not disappointment; for, as I have said before, she did not, she had never hoped. No, the best term for it is, love without hope; and oh! what a bitter thing that is!

During the whole of that morning she had had no time to dwell upon it; she had been occupied while she remained with Mary Markham in struggling against her own sensations—not examining them. But now she paused and pondered: in solitude and in silence, she gave way to bitter thought; but it was not with the weak and wavering irresolution of a feeble mind. On the contrary, though the anguish would have its tear, she regarded her present

fate and future conduct with the firm and energetic purposes of a heart inured to suffer and to decide. Her mind rested upon Richard of Woodville, upon his kindness, his generosity, his chivalrous protection of her who had never met with such protection before; and the first strong determination of her mind expressed itself, in the words she murmured to herself, "I will repay it!"

Then again she asked herself, "Why should I feel shame, or fear, or hesitation, now, at the thought of following him through the world — of watching for the hour, for the moment, when God may grant me the grace to serve him? — He loves another, and is loved by another! He can never be anything to me, but the friend who stood forward to help me in the hour of need. What has sex, or station, to do with it? Why should I care more than if I were a man? and how often do the meanest, by watchful love, find an opportunity to deliver or to support the highest and the mightiest! Why should I think of what men may say or believe? True in my own heart,

and conscious of my truth, I may well laugh at suspicion, which follows such as I am, whatever course they take. How often have I been thought a ribbald and a losel, when I have guarded my words, and looks, and actions, most carefully! and now I will dare to do boldly what my heart tells me, knowing that it is right.— Yet, poor thing,” she added, after a moment, “thou art beggar enough, I fear! thou must husband thy little store well. Let me see; I will count my treasure. There are the fifty half-nobles sent me by the King, and those my dear protector gave me. Now for the little store of the poor old man;” and, drawing a key from her bosom, she crossed the room to where, upon a window seat, there stood a small oaken coffer, containing her apparel and that of the poor old minstrel. After opening the box, and taking out one or two instruments of music which lay at the top, she thrust her hand further down, and brought forth a small leathern pouch, fastened by a thong bound round it several times. It cost her some trouble to unloose it; but at length she spread out the

mouth, and poured the contents upon the top of the clothes in the coffer. She had expected to see nothing but silver and copper; but amongst the rest were several pieces of gold; and besides these, was a piece of parchment, tied up, with some writing upon it, and a gold ring, set with a large precious stone. The former she examined closely, and read the words with some difficulty; for they were written by no very practised hand, in rough and scattered characters. She made it out at length, however, to be merely "My Ella's dowry;" and a tear fell upon it as she read. She thought that the hand-writing was her father's.

She then looked at the ring, and saw by its lustre that it must be of some value; but a strip of leather which was sewn round the gold caught her eye, and she found it, too, traced with some rude characters. They only expressed a date, however, which was 21 July, 1403, and what it meant she knew not. Opening the parchment packet, she then proceeded to examine of what her little dowry consisted; and, to her surprise and joy, she found forty broad

pieces of Gold. "Nay," she exclaimed, "this is indeed wealth; why, I am endowed like a knight's daughter." And well might she say so; for when we remember the difference between the value of gold in that day and at present, the amount she now possessed,—what with the sum she had just found, and the penalty imposed by the King on Simeon of Roydon,—was equal to some six or seven hundred pounds.

"I shall have enough to follow him for ten years," said Ella Brune, gazing on the gold, "without being a charge to any one; and then there may still remain sufficient to gain me admission to a nunnery.—But I will lay it by carefully:" and placing all the gold she had, except the few pieces that had been loose in the pouch, into the parchment which had contained her dowry, she tied it up again carefully, and restored it to its place.

"Yet I will be avaricious," she said. "I will disencumber myself of everything I do not want, and change it into coin.—Shall I sell this ring? No: it may mean something I do not know. 'Tis easily carried, and might create

suspicion if I disposed of it here. Perhaps my cousin at Peronne can tell me more about it. How shall I sell the other things? Nay, I will ask the hostess to do it for me. She will think of her own payment, and will do it well!"

After carefully putting back the ring and the money, she opened the door of the room, and called down the stairs "Hostess, hostess! Mistress Trenchard!"

"Coming, coming, little maid," said the good dame from below. "Do not be in haste; I am with you in a minute;" and after keeping Ella waiting for a short time, more to make herself of importance than because she had anything else to do, she came panting up the stairs, closed the door, and seated herself on the side of the low bed.

"Well, my poor Ella," she said, "what want you with me? Yours is a sad case, indeed, poor thing. My husband and I both said, when you and poor old Murdock Brune went away to foreign lands, leaving your own good country behind you, that harm would come of it."

"And yet he died in England," replied Ella,

with a sigh; "but what you say is very true, hostess; no good has come of it; and we returned poorer than we went.|-I have wherewithal to pay my score," she added, seeing a slight cloud come over good Mistress Trenchard's face; "but yet I shall want more for my necessity; and I would fain ask you a great favour."

"What is that?" asked the hostess, somewhat drily.

"It is simply, that you would sell for me a good many of these things that I do not want," answered Ella. "Here are several instruments of music, which I know cost much, and must produce something."

"Oh, that I will, right willingly!" replied the hostess; and 'tis but right and fitting that you should trust such matters to one who is accustomed to buy and sell, than to do it yourself, who know nothing of trade, God wot. I will have them to Westcheape, where there are plenty of fripperies; or carry them to the Lombards, who, perhaps, know more about such matters."

“I should think that the Lombards would purchase them best,” answered Ella; “for one of these instruments, the viol, was purchased out of Italy, when my grandfather was chief minstrel to the great Earl of Northumberland.”

“Ay, I remember the time well,” said Mistress Trenchard. “Murdock Brune was a great man in those days, and rode upon a grey horse, fit for a knight. He used to pinch my cheek, and call me pretty Dolly Trenchard, till my husband was somewhat crusty;—and so the viol is valuable, you think?”

“Yes, and the ribible too,” answered Ella Brune; “for they were cut by a great maker in Italy, and such are not to be found in England.”

“I will take care, I will take care,” rejoined the hostess. “Gather them all together, and I will send up Tom, the drawer, for them, presently. To-morrow I will take them to the Lombards; for it is somewhat late this evening.”

“Nay, but I have other favours to ask of you, dame,” said Ella Brune. “To-morrow they bury the poor old man, and I must have a

black gown of serge and a white wimple; and I would fain that you went with me to the burial, if you could steal away for an hour; for it will be a sad day for me."

"That will I do, poor maiden," replied the hostess readily; not alone because she took a sincere interest in her fair guest, but because in those days, as in almost all others, people of inferior minds found a strange pleasure in bearing part in any impressive ceremony, however melancholy. As so much of her spare time was likely to be occupied on the morrow, she agreed to run up to Cheape that very night, before the watch was set, and to purchase for Ella Brune the mourning garments which she required. The latter commission she performed fully to the poor girl's satisfaction, returning with a loose gown of fine black serge, ready made, and a wimple and hood of clear lawn, little differing from that of a nun.

"Ella gazed on the dress with some emotion, murmuring to herself, "Ay, the cloister; it must end there at last!—Well, prayer and peace!—'tis the calmest fate, after all."

But the sale of the instruments of music and several other small articles, was not executed quite as well. Men were rogues in those times, as at present, though, perhaps, in the improvement of all things, roguery has not been neglected: and the good Lombards took care not to give more than half the value of the goods they purchased. Neither Ella nor good Mistress Trenchard herself knew any better, however; so that the latter thought she had made a very good bargain, and the former was content. Her store was by this means considerably increased; and, a short time before the appointed hour, Ella, with the hostess, set out towards the hospital of St. James, for the sad task that was to be performed that day.

I will not pause upon the hours that followed. Dark and sorrowful such hours must ever be; for the dim eyes of mortality see the lamp of faith but faintly, and there is nought else to light our gaze through the obscure vault of death to the bright world of re-union. Put the holy promises to our heart as eagerly, as fondly as we will, how difficult

is it to obtain a warm and living image of life beyond this life ! How the clay clings to the clay ! How the spirit cleaveth to the dust with which it hath borne companionship so long ! Strange, too, to say, that we can better realise in our own case the idea of renewed existence, than in the case of those we love. It is comparatively easy to fancy that we who have lived to-day, shall live to-morrow ;—that we, who lie down to rest ourselves in sleep and to rise refreshed, shall sleep in death, and wake again renewed. There is in every man's own heart a sentiment of his immortality, which nothing can blot out, but the vain pride of human intellect—the bitterest ashes of the forbidden fruit. But when we see the dearly loved, the bright, the beautiful, the wise, the good, fall, like a withered leaf, into the dark corruption of the tomb—the light go out like an extinguished lamp—and all that is left, all that has been familiar to our living senses, drop into dust and mingle with its earth again, the Saduceean demon seizes on us ; and it requires a mighty struggle of the spirit, prayer, patience, re-

signation, hope, and faith, to win our belief from the dark actuality before us, and fix it on the distant splendour of a promised world to come.

They were sad hours for poor Ella Brune; and when they were over, the chambers of the heart felt too dark and lonely for her to admit any thoughts but those of the dead. She sent, therefore, to Mary Markham, to tell her that she was too woe-begone to come that day; and, returning to her little chamber at the inn, she sat down to weep, and pass the evening with her memories.

On the following morning early, she once more set out for Westminster, and passed quietly along the road till she reached Charing; but near the hermitage and chapel of St. Catherine, just opposite the cross, she perceived a man standing gazing up the Strand, with the serpent embroidered on the black ground, which distinguished the followers of Sir Simeon of Roydon. Her fears might have betrayed her; for she forgot for a moment the complete change of her dress, and fancied that she must be instantly recognised; but the

instant after, recovering her presence of mind, she drew the hood far over her face, and passed the man boldly, without his even turning to look at her. She then made her way on towards Tote-hill, and soon came to the gates of the house in which Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken up his temporary abode.

Few but the higher nobility, or persons immediately attached to the court, indulged in those days in the luxury of a dwelling in London or the neighbouring city; and when business or pleasure called inferior personages to the capital, they either took up their dwelling at a hostel, or found lodging in the mansions of some of the great families to whom they were attached by friendship or relationship. Nor was such hospitality ever refused, so long as the house could contain more guests; for each man's consequence, and sometimes his safety, depended upon the number of those whom he entertained; and even when the lord was absent from his own dwelling, the doors were always open to those who were known to be connected with him. Thus Sir Philip Beau-

champ had found ready lodging in the house of one of the numerous family of that name, the head of which was then the Earl of Warwick, though, ere many years had passed, an only daughter bore that glorious title into the house of Neville.

When Ella reached the mansion, the porter, distinguished by the cognizance of the bear, was standing before the gates, talking with a young man, who seemed to have just dismounted from a tired horse and held the bridle-rein cast over his arm.

In answer to Ella's enquiry for the Lady Mary Markham, the old servant laughed, saying, "Here is another!—if it goes on thus all day, there will be nothing else but the opening of gates for a pretty lady who is not here.—She departed last night with Sir Philip, fair maid. They went in great haste, good sooth I know not why; for 'twas but two hours before, the sturdy old knight told me he should stay three days; but they had letters by a messenger from the country, so, perchance his daughter is ill."

“The blessed Virgin give her deliverance !” said Ella, turning away with a disappointed look ; and, bending her steps back towards the city of London, she walked slowly on along the dusty road, absorbed in no very cheerful thoughts, and marking little of what passed around her. But few people were yet abroad between the two towns—the Strand was almost solitary ; and she had nearly reached the wall of the garden of Durham House, which ran along to the Temple, when she heard a voice behind her exclaim, in a sharp tone, “ Why do you follow her, master knave ? ”

“ What is that to you, blue tabard ! ” replied another tongue.

“ I will let you know right soon, if you do not desist,” answered the first.

“ Whom do you serve ? ” asked the second.

“ The King ! ” was the reply ; “ so away with you.”

Ella looked round, and beheld the man whom she had found speaking with the porter a moment before, bending his brows sternly upon the servant of Sir Simeon Roydon, whom

she had seen watching near the hermitage of St. Catherine, as she passed up the Strand. The latter, however, seemed to be animated by no very pugnacious spirit, for he merely replied, "Methinks one man has a right to walk the high-road to London as well as another."

But he did not proceed to enforce this right by following the course he had been pursuing; and, crossing over from the south to the north side of the way, he was soon lost amongst the low shops and small houses which there occupied the middle of the road.

"I will ride along beside you, fair maiden," said Ned Dyrham, for he it was who had come up, "though I should not wonder, from what the porter told me just now, if you were the person I am looking for."

He spoke civilly and gravely; and Ella replied, with a bright smile, "Ha! perhaps it is so; for he said he would send.—Whom do you come from?"

"I come from Richard of Woodville," answered the man; "and I am sent to a maiden named Ella Brune, living not far up the new street

somewhat beyond the old Temple, in an hostelry called the Falcon."

" 'Tis I—'tis I !" cried Ella. " Oh ! I am glad to see you."

Her bright eyes lighted up, and her fair face glowed with an expression of joy and satisfaction, which added in no small degree to its loveliness ; for, though we hear much of beauty in distress being heightened by tears, yet there is an inherent harmony between man's heart and joy, which makes the expression thereof always more pleasant to the eye than that of any other emotion.

Ned Dyram gazed at her with admiration, but withdrew his eyes the moment after, and resumed a more sober look. " I will give you all his messages by and by," he said, " for I shall lodge at the Falcon to-night, and have much to say.—But yet I may as well tell you a part as we go along," he continued, dismounting from his horse, and taking the bridle on his arm. " First, fair maiden, I was to ask how you fared, and what you intended to do?"

“I have fared ill and well,” answered Ella Brune; “but that is a long story, and I will relate it to you afterwards; for that I can talk of, though the people of the house should be present; but what I am to do, is a deeper question, and I know not well how to answer it.—I have friends at the court of Burgundy—”

“What, then, are you of noble race, lady?” asked Ned Dyram, in an altered tone.

“Oh, no!” replied Ella Brune, with a faint smile. “The cousin of whom I speak is but a goldsmith to the count of Charolois; but, ’tis a long journey for a woman to take alone, through foreign lands, and amongst a people somewhat unruly.”

“Why not come with us?” enquired Ned Dyram; “we sail from Dover in three days, and our company will be your protection. Did not Childe Richard tell you he was going?”

“Yes,” answered Ella Brune, casting down her eyes, “but he did not seem to like the thought of having a woman in his company.”

“Faith! that is courteous of the good youth,” cried Ned Dyram, with a low sharp

laugh. "He may win his spurs, but will not merit them, if he refuses protection to a lady."

"That I am sure he would not do," replied Ella gravely;—"he has given me the noblest protection at my need; but he may not think it right."

"No, no; you have mistaken him," said Ned Dyrham;—"he is courteous and kind without a doubt. He might think it better for yourself to go to York, as he bade me tell you, and to see your friends there, and to claim your rights; but if you judge fit to turn your steps to Burgundy instead, depend upon it, he will freely give you aid and comfort on the way. If he did doubt," added the man, "'twas but that he thought his lady-love might be jealous, if she heard that he had so fair a maiden in his company—for you know he is a lover?"—and he fixed his eyes enquiringly on Ella's face.

"I know he is," she answered calmly, and without a change of feature. "I know the lady, too; but she is not unwilling that I should go; and I dread much to show myself in York."

“Why so?” demanded Ned Dyram. But Ella Brune was not sufficiently won by his countenance or manner to grant him the same confidence that she had reposed in Richard of Woodville; and she replied, “For many reasons; but the first and strongest is, that there are persons there who have seized on that which should be mine. They are powerful; I am weak; and ’tis likely, as in such case often happens, that they would be willing to add wrong to wrong.”

“Not only often, but always,” replied Ned Dyram; “therefore I say, fair maiden, you had better come with us. Here’s one arm will strike a stroke for you, should need be; and there are plenty more amongst us who will do the like.”

Ella answered him with a bright smile; but at that moment they were turning up the lane opposite the gate of the Temple, and she paused in her reply, willing to think farther and see more of her companion before she decided.

“Stay, fair maiden!” continued Ned Dyram, who well knew where the hostelry of the

Falcon was situate. "It may be as well to keep our counsel, whatever it be, from host and hostess. Gossip is a part of their trade; and it is wise to avoid giving them occasion. I will give you, when we are within, a letter from my young lord, and read it to you, too, as perchance you cannot do that yourself; but it will let the people see, that I am not without authority to hold converse with you, which may be needful."

"Nay," answered Ella, "I can read it myself, for I have not been without such training."

"Ay, I forgot," rejoined Ned Dyrham, with one of his light sneers; "had you been a princess, you would not have been able to read. Such clerk-craft is only fit for citizens and monks. I wonder how Childe Richard learned to read and write; I fear it will spoil him for a soldier."

The satire was not altogether just; for, though it did not unfrequently happen that high nobles and celebrated warriors and statesmen were as illiterate as the merest boors, and in some instances (especially after the wars of the Roses had deluged the land with blood, and interrupted all

the peaceful arts of life) the barons affected to treat with sovereign contempt the cultivation of the mind, yet such was not by any means so generally the case, as the pride of modern civilization has been eager to show. We have proofs incontestable that, in the reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., and Henry V., men were by no means so generally ignorant as has been supposed. The house of Lancaster was proud of its patronage of literature; and, though more than one valiant nobleman could not sign his own name, or could do so with difficulty, there is much reason to believe that the exceptions have been pointed out as the rule; for we know that many a citizen of London could not only maintain, without the aid of another hand, long and intricate correspondence with foreign merchants, but also took delight in the reading during winter's nights, of Chaucer and Gower, if not in studying secretly the writings of Wickliffe and his disciples.

Ella Brune replied not, but walked on into the house, calling the good hostess, who in that day as in others, often supplied the place of

both master and mistress in a house of public entertainment. Ned Dyram followed her with his eyes into the house, scrutinizing with keen and wondering glance the beauties of form which even the long loose robe of serge could not fully conceal. He marvelled at the grace he beheld, even more rare at that day, amongst the sons and daughters of toil, than at present; and, although the pride of rank and station could not, in his case, suggest the bold disregard of all law and decency in seeking the gratification of passion, his feelings toward Ella Brune were not very far different from those of Sir Simeon of Roydon. He might have more respect for the opinion of the world, by which he hoped to rise; he might even have more respect for, and more belief in, virtue, for he was a wiser man; he might seek to obtain his ends by other means; he was even not incapable of love, —strong, passionate, overpowering, love; but the moving power was the same. It was all animal; for, strange to say, though his intellect was far superior to that of most men of his day; though he had far more mind than was needful,

or even advantageous, in his commerce with the world of that age, his impulses were all animal towards others. That which he cared for little in himself, he admired, he almost worshipped, in woman. It was beauty of form and feature only, that attracted him. Mind he cared not for—he thought not of; nay, up to that moment, he perhaps either doubted whether it existed in the other sex, or thought it a disadvantage if it did. Even more, the heart itself he valued little; or, rather, that strange and complex tissue of emotions, springing from what source we know not, entwined with our mortal nature—by what delicate threads who can say?—which we are accustomed to ascribe to the heart, he regarded but as an almost worthless adjunct. His was the eager love—forgive me, if I profane what should be a holy name, rather than use a coarser term—of the wild beast, the appetite of the tiger, only tempered by the shrewdness of the fox. I mean not to say it always remained so; for, under the power of passion and circumstances, the human heart is tutored as a child. Neither would I say that ought like

love had yet touched his bosom for Ella Brune; I speak but of his ordinary feeling towards woman; but feelings of that sort are sooner roused than those of a higher nature. He saw that she was very beautiful—more beautiful, he thought, than any woman of his own station that ever he had beheld; and that was enough to make him determine upon counteracting his master's wishes and counsel, and persuading Ella to turn her steps in the same course in which his own were directed. He knew not how willing she was to be persuaded; he knew not that she was at heart already resolved; but he managed skilfully, he watched shrewdly through the whole of his after-communications with her during the day. He discovered much—he discovered all, indeed, but one deep secret, which might have been penetrated by a woman's eyes, but which was hid from his, with all their keenness—the motive, the feeling, that led her so strongly in the very path he wished. He saw, indeed, that she was so inclined; he saw that there was a voice always seconding him in her heart, and he took especial care to furnish

that voice with arguments which seemed irresistible. He contrived, too, to win upon her much; for there was in his conversation that mingling of frankness and flattering courtesy, of apparent carelessness of pleasing with all the arts of giving pleasure, and that range of desultory knowledge and tone of superior mind, with apparent simplicity of manner, and contempt for assumption, which of all things are the most calculated to dazzle and impress for a time. 'Tis the lighter qualities that catch, the deeper ones that bind; and though, had there been a comparison drawn between him, who was her companion for a great part of that evening, and Richard of Woodville, Ella Brune would have laughed in scorn; yet she listened, well pleased, to the varied conversation with which he whiled away the hours, when she could wean her thoughts from dearer, though more painful themes, yielded to his arguments when they seconded the purposes of her own heart, and readily accepted his offered service to aid her in executing the plan she adopted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOURNEY AND THE VOYAGE.

THE sun rose behind some light grey clouds, and the blue sky was veiled; but the birds made the welkin ring from amongst the young leaves of the April trees, and told of the coming brightness of the day. Why, or wherefore, let men of science say; but one thing is certain, the seasons at that time were different from those at present: they were earlier; they were more distinct; spring was spring, and summer was summer; and winter, content with holding his own right stiffly, did not attempt to invade the rights of his brethren. Far in the north of England we had vines growing and bearing fruit in the open air. At Hexham there was a vineyard; and wine was made in more than one

English county—not very good, it is to be supposed, but still good enough to be drunk, and to prove the longer and more genial reign of summer in our island. Thus, though the morning was grey, as I have said, and April had not yet come to an end, the air was as warm as it is often now in June, and every bank was already covered with flowers.

There were horses before the gate of Richard of Woodville's house, and men busily preparing them for a journey. There was the heavy charger, or battle horse, with tall and boney limbs, well fitted to bear up under the weight of a steel-covered rider; and the lighter, but still powerful palfrey, somewhat of the size and make of a hunter of the present day, to carry the master along the road. Besides these, appeared many another beast; horses for the yeomen and servants, and horses and mules for the baggage: the load of armour for himself and for his men which the young adventurer carried with him, requiring not a few of those serviceable brutes who bow their heads to man's will, in order to carry it to the sea-shore. At length all

was prepared; the packs were put upon the beasts, the drivers were at their heads, the yeomen by their saddles; and with ten stout men and two boys, fourteen horses, three mules, a plentiful store of arms, and all the money he could raise, in his wallet, Richard of Woodville issued forth, gave his last commands to the old man and woman whom he left behind in the hall, and, springing into the saddle, began his journey towards Dover.

It was not without a sigh that he set out; for he was leaving the land in which Mary Markham dwelt; but yet he thought he was going to win honour for her sake — perchance to win her herself; and all the bright hopes and expectations of youth soon gathered on his way, more vivid and more glowing in his case, than they could be in that of any youth of the present day, taking his departure for foreign lands. If at present each country knows but very little in reality of its neighbour, if England entertains false views and wild imaginations regarding France and her people, and France has not the slightest particle of knowledge in regard to the

feelings, character, and habits of thought, of the English, how much more must such have been the case in an age when communication was rare, and then only or chiefly by word of mouth! It is true that the state of geographical knowledge was not so low as has been generally supposed, for we are very apt to look upon ourselves as wonderful people, and to imagine that nobody knew anything before ourselves; and the difference between former ages and the present is more in the general diffusion of knowledge than in its amount. In the very age of which we speak, the famous Henry of Vasco was pursuing his great project for reaching India by passing round Africa, attempting to establish Portuguese stations on the coast of that continent, and to communicate with the natives; “e poi aver con essi loro comercio per l’onore e utilità del Regno.”*

The highways of Europe were well known; for mercantile transactions between country and country were carried on upon a system so totally different from that existing at present, that

* Barros, Dec. i. lib. i. cap. 6.

multitudes of the citizens of every commercial state were constantly wandering over the face of Europe, and bringing home anecdotes, if not much solid information, regarding the distant lands they had visited. The merchant frequently accompanied his goods; and the smaller traders, especially from the cities of Italy, travelled every season from fair to fair and mart to mart, throughout the whole of the civilized world. Besides the communications which thus took place, and the information thus diffused, intelligence of a different sort was carried by another class, who may have been said to have represented in that day the tourists of the present. Chivalry, indeed, had greatly declined since the days of Richard I., and even since the time of the Black Prince; but still it was a constant practice for young knights and nobles of every country to visit the courts of foreign princes, in order either to acquire the warlike arts then practised, or to gain distinction by feats of arms. Few books of travels were written, it is true, and fewer read; for the art of printing had not yet, by the easy multiplication of copies, placed

the stores of learning within the reach of the many; and one of the sources from which vast information might have been derived was cut off, by the general abhorrence with which the ever-wandering tribes of Israel were regarded, and the habitual taciturnity which had thus been produced in a people naturally loquacious.

Still a great deal of desultory and vague information concerning distant lands was floating about society. Strange tales were told, it is true, and truth deformed by fiction; but imagination had plenty of materials out of which to form splendid structures; and bright pictures of the far and the future, certainly did present themselves to the glowing fancy of Richard of Woodville, as he rode on upon his way. Knowing his own courage, his own skill, and his own strength; energetic in character, resolute, and persevering; animated by love, and encouraged by hope, he might well look forward to the world as a harvest-field of glory, into which he was about to put the sickle. Then came all the vague and misty representations that imagination could call up of distant courts and

foreign princes, tilt and tournament, and high emprise; and the adventurous spirit of the times of old made his bosom thrill with dim visions of strange scenes and unknown places, accidents, difficulties, dangers, enterprises, — the hard rough ore from which the gold of praise and renown was still to be extracted.

Movement and exertion are the life-blood of youth; and as he rode on, the spirits of Richard of Woodville rose higher and higher; expectation expanded; the regrets were left behind; and “Onward, onward!” was the cry of his heart, as the grey cloud broke into mottled flakes upon the sky, and gradually disappeared, as if absorbed by the blue heaven which it had previously covered.

Through the rich wooded land of England he took his way for four days, contriving generally to make his resting-place for the night at some town which possessed the advantage of an inn, or at the house of some old friend of his family, where he was sure of kind reception. In the day-time, however, many of his meals were eaten in the open field, or under the broad

shade of the trees; and, as he sat, after partaking lightly of the food which had been brought with him, while the horses were finishing their provender, the birds singing in the trees above often brought back to his mind, the words of the minstrel's girl's lay:—

“ The lark shall sing on high,
 Whatever shore thou rovest ;
The nightingale shall try
 To call up her thou lovest.
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find ;
 Shall win praise,
 And golden days,
And live in many a tale.”

It seemed like the song of hope, and rang in his ear, mingling with the notes of the black-bird, the thrush, and the wood-lark, and promising success and happiness. The words, too, called up the image of Mary Markham, as she herself would have wished, the end and object of all his hopes and wishes, the crowning reward of every deed he thought to do. It is true that, with her, still appeared to the eye of memory, the form of poor Ella Brune ; but it was with very different sensations. He felt grateful

to her for that cheering song ; and, indeed, how often is it in life, that a few words of hope and encouragement are more valuable to us, are of more real and solid benefit, than a gift of gold and gems ! for moral support to the heart of man, in the hour of difficulty, is worth all that the careless hand of wealth and power can bestow. But he felt no love—he might admire her, he might think her beautiful ; but it was with the cold admiration of taste, not with passion. Her loveliness to him was as that of a picture or statue, and the only warmer sensations that he felt when he thought of her, were pity for her misfortunes, and interest in her fate. Nor did this arise either in coldness of nature, or the haughty pride of noble birth ; but love was with him, as it was with many in days somewhat previous to his own, very different from the transitory and mutable passion which so generally bears that name. It was the absorbing principle of his whole nature, the ruling power of his heart, concentrated all in one—indivisible—unchangeable,—a spirit in his spirit, a devotion, almost a worship. I say not,

that in former times, before he had felt that passion, he might not have lived as others lived,—that he might not have trifled with the fair and bright wherever he found them,—that the fiery eagerness of youthful blood might not have carried him to folly, and to wrong; but from the moment he had learned to love Mary Markham, his heart had been for her alone, and the gate of his affections was closed against all others. Thus, could she have seen his inmost thoughts, she would have found how fully justified was her confidence, and might, perhaps, have blushed to recollect that one doubt had ever crossed her bosom.

It was about three o'clock on the evening of the fourth day, that Richard of Woodville—passing along by the priory, and leaving the church of St. Mary to the left, with the towers of the old castle frowning from the steep above, on one side, and the round chapel of the ancient temple house peeping over the hill upon the other—entered the small town of Dover, and approached the sea-shore, which, in those days, unencumbered by the immense masses of shingle

that have since been rolled along the coast, extended but a short distance from the base of the primeval cliffs. Thus the town was then thrust into the narrow valley at the foot of the two hills; and the moment that the houses were passed, the wide scene of the sea, with a number of small vessels lying almost close to the shore, broke upon the eye.

The associations of the people naturally gave to the principal hostelry of the place, a similar name to that which it has ever since borne. Though very differently situated and maintained, the chief place of public reception in the town of Dover, was then called the Bark, as it is now called the Ship; and although that port was not the principal place through which the communication between England and France took place; yet, ever since Calais had been an English possession, a great traffic had been carried on by Dover, so that the hostelry of the Bark was one of the most comfortable and best appointed in the kingdom.

As every man of wealth and consequence who landed at, or embarked from, that port, brought

his horses with him, numerous ostlers and stable boys were always ready to take charge of the guests' steeds; and as soon as a gentleman's train was seen coming down the street, loud shouts from the host called forth a crowd of expectant faces, and ready hands to give assistance to the arriving guests.

The first amongst those who appeared, was Ned Dym, in his blue tabard; and, although he did not condescend to hold his master's stirrup, but left that task to others, yet he advanced to the young gentleman's side, with some pride in the numbers and gallant appearance of the train, and informed him as he dismounted, that he had performed his errand in London; and also the charge which he had received for Dover, having engaged a large bark, named the Lucy Neville, to carry his master, with horses and attendants, to the small town of Nieuport, on the Flemish coast.

"The tide will serve at five o'clock, sir," he said. "There is time to embark the horses and baggage, if you will, while you and the men sup. We have plenty of hands here to help;

and I will see it all done safely. If not, we must stop till to-morrow."

The host put in his word, however, observing, "that the young lord might be tired with a long journey, that it were better to wait and part with the morning tide, and that it was Friday—an inauspicious day to put to sea."

But the surface of the water was calm ; the sky was bright and clear ; and it was the last day of the period which Woodville had fixed, in his communication with the King, for his stay in England. He therefore determined to follow the opinion of Ned Dyram, instead of that of the host, which there was no absolute impossibility to prevent him from supposing interested ; and, ordering his horses and luggage to be embarked, with manifold charges to his skilful attendant, to look well to the safety of the chargers, he sat down to the ample supper which was soon after on the board, proposing to be down on the beach before his orders regarding the horses were put in execution.

The master and the man, in those more simple days, sat at the same board in the inn,

and often at the castle: and as he knew that his own rising would be a signal for the rest to cease their meal, Richard of Woodville remained for several minutes, to allow the more slow and deliberate to accomplish the great function of the mindless. At length, however, he rose, discharged his score, added largess to payment, and then, with the "fair voyage, noble sir," of the host, and the good wishes of drawers and ostlers, proceeded to the shore, where he fully expected to find Ned Dyram busily engaged in shipping his baggage.

No one was there, however, but two or three of the horseboys of the hostel, who saluted him with the tidings, that all was on board. As he cast his eyes seaward, he saw a large boat returning from a ship at some small distance from the shore, with Ned Dyram in the stern; and in a few minutes after, the active superintendent of the embarkation jumped ashore, with a laugh, saying, "Ah sir! so you could not trust me! But all is safe, no hide rubbed off, no knees broken, no shoulder shaken; and if they do not kick themselves to

pieces before we reach Nieuport, you will have as stout chargers to ride, as any in Burgundy.— But you are not going to embark yet? The tide will not serve for half an hour; and I have left my saddle-bags at the hostel.”

“Well, run quick, and get them,” replied his master. “I would fain see how all is stowed, before we sail.”

“And know little about it, when you do see,” answered Ned Dyam, with his usual rude bluntness, or that which appeared to be such.

Richard of Woodville might feel a little angry at his saucy tone; but it was only a passing emotion, easily extinguished. “I certainly know little of stowing ships, my good friend,” he answered, “seeing that I never was in one in my life; but common sense is a great thing, master Dyam; and I am not likely to be mistaken as to whether the horses are so placed as to run the least chance of hurting themselves or each other. Back to the hostel, then, as I ordered, with all speed; and do not let me have to wait for you.”

The last words were spoken in a tone of com-

mand, which did not much please the hearer ; but there were certain feelings in his breast that rendered him unwilling to offend a master on whom he had no tie of old services ; and he therefore hurried his pace away, as long as he was within sight. He contrived to keep Woodville waiting, however, for at least twenty minutes ; and as the young gentleman gazed towards the ship, he saw the large and cumbersome sails slowly unfurled, and preparations of various kinds made for putting to sea. His patience was well nigh exhausted, and he had already taken his place in the boat, intending to bid the men pull away, when Ned Dyram appeared, coming down from the inn, and carrying his saddle bags over his arm, while a man followed bearing a heavy coffre.

Richard of Woodville smiled, saying to his yeoman of the stirrup, " I knew not our friend Ned had such mass of baggage, or I would have given him further time."

"He has got his tools there, I doubt," observed the old armourer ; "for he is a famous workman, both in steel and gilding, though somewhat new-fangled in his notions."

The minute after Ned Dyram was seated in the boat ; the men gave way ; and over the calm waters of a sea just rippled by a soft but favourable breeze, she flew towards the ship. All on board were in the bustle of departure ; and, before Richard of Woodville had examined the horses, and satisfied himself that everything had been carefully and thoughtfully arranged for their safety, the bark was under weigh. He looked round for Ned Dyram, willing to make up, by some praise of his attention and judgment, for any sharpness of speech on the shore ; but the yeomen told him, that their comrade had gone below, saying that he was always sick at sea ; and the young gentleman, escaping from the crowd and confusion, which existed amongst horses and men in the fore part of the vessel, retired to the stern, and took up his position near the steersman, while the cliffs of England, and the tall towers of the castle, with the churches and houses below, slowly diminished, as moving heavily through the water the bark laid her course for the town of Nieuport.

The bustle soon ceased upon the deck ; some

of the yeomen laid themselves down to sleep, if sleep they might ; the rest were down below ; the mariners who remained on deck proceeded with their ordinary tasks in silence ; the wind wafted them gently along with a soft and easy motion ; and the sun, declining in the sky, shone along the bosom of the sea as if laying down a golden path, midway between France and England.

The feeling of parting from home, was renewed in the bosom of Richard of Woodville, as he gazed back at the slowly waning shores of his native land, leaning his arms, folded on his chest, upon the bulwark of the stern. He felt no inclination to converse ; and the man at the huge tiller seemed little disposed to speak. All was silent, except an occasional snatch of a rude song, with which one of the seamen cheered his idleness, from time to time ; till at length a sweeter voice was heard, singing in low and almost plaintive tones ; and, turning suddenly round, Woodville beheld a female figure, clothed in black, leaning upon the opposite side of the vessel, and gazing, like himself, upon the receding cliffs of England. He listened as she

sang; but the first stanza of her lay was done,
before he could catch the words.

SONG.

I.

Oh, leave longing ! dream no more
Of sunny hours to come ;
Dreams that fade like that loved shore,
Where once we made our home.
Farewell ; and sing lullabie
To all the joys that pass us by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—NENNIE !

II.

Oh, leave sighing ! thought is vain
Of all the treasures past ;
Hope and fear, delight and pain,
Are clay, and cannot last.
Farewell ; and sing lullabie
To all the things that pass us by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—NENNIE !

III.

Oh, leave looking—on the wave
That dances in the ray ;
See ! now it curls its crest so brave,
And now it melts away.
Farewell ; and sing lullabie
To it and all that passes by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—NENNIE.

The voice was so sweet, the music was so plaintive, that, without knowing it, and though she sang in a low and subdued tone, the singer had every ear turned to listen. Richard of Woodville did not require to see her face, to recognise Ella Brune, though the change in her dress might have proved an effectual means of concealment, had she been disposed to hide herself from him. The peculiarly mellow and musical tone of her voice was enough; and, as soon as the lay ceased, Woodville crossed over and spoke to her.

But she showed no surprise at seeing him, greeting him with a smile, and answering gaily, to his enquiry, if she knew that he was in the same ship,—“Certainly; that was the reason that I came. I am going to be headstrong, noble sir, for the rest of my life. I would not go to York, as you see; for I fancied that when people have got hold of that which does not belong to them, they may strike at any hand which strives to take it away, especially if it be that of a woman.”

“You are right, Ella,” answered Richard

of Woodville; "I had not thought of that."

"Then I am going to Peronne, or it may be to Dijon," continued Ella, in a tone still light, notwithstanding the somewhat melancholy character of her song, "because I think I can be of service, perhaps, to some who have been kind to me; and then, too, I intend to amass great store of money, and marry a scrivener."

"You are gay, Ella," replied Woodville somewhat gravely, sitting down beside her, as she still leaned over the side of the vessel.

"Do you see those waves?" she said; "and how they dance and sparkle?"

"Yes," replied her companion, "what then?"

"There are depths beneath!" answered Ella. "Henceforth I will be gay—on the surface, at least, like the sunny sea; but it is because I have more profound thoughts within me, than when I seemed most sad. Keep my secret, noble sir."

"That I will, Ella," replied Woodville; "but tell me—Did my servant find you out?"

“Yes,” and did me good service,” answered the girl, “for he brought me here.”

“And the poor fool was afraid I should be offended,” said Woodville, “for he has avoided mentioning your name.”

“Perhaps so,” rejoined Ella, “for he knew, I believe, that you did not wish to have me in your company.—’Tis a charge, noble sir; and a poor minstrel girl is not fit for a high gentleman’s train.”

“Nay, you do me wrong, Ella,” answered Richard of Woodville; “right willingly my poor girl, now as heretofore, in this as in other things, will I give you protection. I thought, indeed, that it might be better for yourself to remain; and there were reasons, moreover, that you do not know.”

“Nay, but I do know, sir,” replied Ella, interrupting him; “I know it all. I have made acquaintance with your lady-love, and sat at her knee and sung to her; and she has befriended the poor lonely girl, as you did before her; and she told me, she would neither doubt you nor me, though you took me on your journey, and protected me by the way.”

“Dear, frank Mary!” exclaimed Richard of Woodville, “there spoke her own true heart. But tell me more about this, Ella. How did you see her?—when?—where?”

Ella Brune did as he bade her, and related to him all that had occurred to her since he had left London. As she spoke, her eye was generally averted; but sometimes it glanced to his countenance, especially when she either referred to Sir Simeon of Roydon or to Mary Markham; and she saw with pleasure the flush upon her young protector’s cheek, the knitted brow, and flashing eye, when she told the outrage she had endured, and the look of generous satisfaction which lighted up each feature, when she spoke of the protection she had received from good Sir Philip Beauchamp and the King.

“Ah! my noble uncle!” he said, “he is, indeed, somewhat harsh and rash when the warm blood stirs within him, as all these old knights are, Ella; but there never was a man more ready to draw the sword or open the purse for those who are in need of either,

than himself. And so the King befriended you, too?" He is well worthy of his royal name, and has done but justice on this arch knave."

"Not half justice," answered Ella Brune, with a sudden change of tone; "but no matter for that, the hand of vengeance will reach him one of these days. He cannot hide his deeds from God!—But you speak not of your sweet lady;—was she not kind to the poor minstrel girl?"

"She is always kind," answered Richard of Woodville. "God's blessing on her blithe heart! She would fain give the same sunshine that is within her own soft bosom, to every one around her."

"That cannot be," answered Ella Brune; "there are some made to be happy, some unhappy, in this world. Fortune has but a certain store, and she parts it unequally, though perhaps not blindly, as men say. But there's a place where all is made equal;" and, resuming quickly her lighter tone, she went on dwelling long upon every word that

Mary Markham had said to her, seeming to take a pleasure in that, which had in reality, no small portion of pain mingled with it. Such is not infrequently the case, indeed, with almost all men; for it is wonderful how the bee of the human heart will contrive to extract sweets from the bitter things of life; but perhaps there might be a little art in it—innocent art indeed—most innocent; for its only object was to hide from the eyes of Richard of Woodville that there was any feeling in her bosom towards him but deep gratitude and perfect confidence. She dwelt then upon her he loved, as if the subject were as pleasing to her as to himself; and though she spoke gaily—sometimes almost in a jesting tone—yet there were touches of deep feeling mingled every now and then with all she said, which made him perceive that, as she herself had told him, the lightness was in manner alone, and not in the mind.

At all events, her conduct had one effect which she could have desired: it removed all doubt and hesitation from the mind of Richard

of Woodville, if any such remained, in regard to his behaviour towards her;—it did away all scruple as to guarding and protecting her on the way, as far as their roads lay together.

One point, indeed, in her account puzzled him, and excited his curiosity—which was the sudden departure of his uncle and Mary from Westminster. “Well,” he thought, “I never loved the task of discovering mysteries, and have ever been willing to leave Time to solve them, else I should have troubled my brain somewhat more about my sweet Mary’s fate and history than I have done;” and, after pondering for a few moments more, he turned again to other subjects with Ella Brune. Pleased and entertained by her conversation, he scarcely turned his eyes back towards the coast of England till the cliffs had become faint and grey, like a cloud upon the edge of the sky; while the sun setting over the waters seemed to change them into liquid fire. In the meantime, wafted on by the light breeze, the ship continued her slow way; and, as the orb

of day sank below the horizon, the moon, which had been up for some little time, poured her silver light upon the water—no longer outshone by the brighter beams. The sky remained pure and blue; the stars appeared faint amidst the lustre shed by the queen of night; and the water dashing from the stern, looked like waves of molten silver as they flowed away. Nothing could be more calm, more grand, more beautiful, than the scene, with the wide expanse of heaven, and the wide expanse of sea, and the pure lights above and the glistening ripple below, and the curtain of darkness hanging round the verge of all things, like the deep veil of a past and future eternity.

Neither Ella Brune nor Richard of Woodville could help feeling the influence of the hour, for the grand things of nature raise and elevate the human heart, whether man will or not. They lived in a rude age, it is true; but the spirit of each was high and fine; and their conversation gradually took its tone from the scene that met their eyes on all sides. They might not know that those stars were un-

numbered suns, or wandering planets, like their own; they might not know that the bright broad orb that spread her light upon the waves was an attendant world, wheeling through space around that in which they lived; they had no skill to people the immensity with miracles of creative power; but they knew that all they beheld was the handiwork of God, and they felt that it was very beautiful and very good. Their souls were naturally led up to the contemplation of things above the earth; and while Richard of Woodville learned hope and confidence in Him who had spread the heaven with stars and clothed the earth in loveliness, Ella Brune took to her heart, from the same source, the lesson of firmness and resignation.

They gazed, they wondered, they adored; and each spoke to the other, some of the feelings which were in their hearts; but some only, for there were many that they could not speak.

“I remember,” said Ella, at length, in a low voice, “when I was at a town called Innsbruck, in the midst of beautiful mountains, hearing the nuns chant a hymn, which I caught up by

ear; and the poor old man and I turned it, as best we might, into English, and used often in our wanderings to console ourselves with singing it, when little else had we to console us. It comes into my mind to-night more than ever."

"Let me hear it, then, Ella," said Richard of Woodville; "I love all music."

"I will sing it," replied Ella; "but you must not hear it only. You must join, in heart, if not in voice."

HYMN.

Oh glorious! oh mighty! Lord God of salvation!
 Thy name let us praise from the depth of the heart;
 Let tongue sing to tongue, and nation to nation,
 And in the glad hymn, all thy works bear a part.

The tops of the mountains with praises are ringing,
 The depths of the valleys re-echo the cry,
 The waves of the ocean Thy glories are singing,
 The clouds and the winds find a voice as they fly;

The weakest, the strongest, the lowly, the glorious,
 The living on earth, and the dead in the grave!
 For the arm of thy Son over death is victorious,
 With power to redeem, and with mercy to save.

Oh glorious! oh mighty! Lord God of salvation!
 To Thee let us sing from the depth of the heart;
 Let tongue tell to tongue, and nation to nation,
 How bountiful, gracious, and holy Thou art.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOREIGN LAND.

THE night had fallen nearly an hour ere Richard of Woodville, Ella Brune, and the young Englishman's attendants, were seated for the first time round the table of a small Flemish inn, on the day after they had left the shores of their native land. Strange as it may seem, that with a wind not unfavourable, somewhat more than twenty-four hours should be occupied by a voyage of less than sixty miles, yet such had been the case between Dover and Nieuport, for it was more than five hours past noon, on the evening following that on which they set sail, when the bark that bore Richard of Woodville entered the mouth of the little river on which that port is situated. But the art of navigation

was little known in those times; and the wind, which, though directly fair at first, was never strong enough to give the ship much way through the water, veered round soon after midnight, not to a point exactly contrary, but to one which favoured the course of the voyagers very little; so that if it had not again changed before night, another twelve hours might have been passed upon the sea. At length, however, the land, which had been for some time in sight, grew clear and more strongly marked; the towers of village churches were seen, distinct; and, anchoring as near the town as possible, the disembarcation was commenced without delay, in order to accomplish the task before nightfall. Nevertheless, ere horses and baggage were all safely on the shore, the day had well nigh come to an end; so that, as I have said, it was dark before the young Englishman, Ella Brune and his attendants, were seated round the table of the poor hostel, which was the only place of entertainment that the town afforded.

Here first the services of the poor minstrel girl became really valuable to her protector;

for notwithstanding the proximity of the English coast, not a soul in the hostel could speak ought else but the Flemish tongue. There were evidently numerous other guests, all requiring entertainment; though with a strange exclusiveness, hardly known in those days, they kept themselves closely shut up in the rooms which had been retained for their own accommodation; and as neither Woodville nor any of his train, not even excepting the learned Ned Dyrham, knew one word of the language, the whole party would have fared ill, had not Ella, in tones which rendered even that harsh jargon sweet, given, in the quality of interpreter, the necessary orders for all that was required.

The greatest difficulty seemed to be in obtaining chambers, in which the somewhat numerous party of the young cavalier could find repose. The stable and the adjoining barn were full already of horses and mules, even to overflowing, otherwise they might have afforded accommodation to men who were accustomed in their own country to lie hard, and yet sleep lightly; and only one room of any size was

vacant, with a small closet hard by, containing a low pallet. The latter, Richard of Woodville at once assigned to Ella Brune; the former he reserved for himself and three of his men, of whom Ned Dyrham was one; and it was finally arranged that the rest should be provided with dry hay, mown from the neighbouring sandy ground, in the hall where they supped.

As soon as the meal was over, the board was cleared, the hay brought in, Ella retired to her pallet, Richard of Woodville to his; straw was laid down across his door for the three men; and the whole party were soon in the arms of slumber. Richard of Woodville dreamed, however, with visions coming thick and fast, and changing as they came, like the figures in a phantasmagoria. Now he was in the King's court, defying Simeon of Roydon to battle; now at the old hall at Dunbury, with Isabel, and Dacre, and Mary, and poor Catherine Beauchamp herself. Then suddenly the scene changed, and he was by the moonlight stream near Abbots Ann, with Hal of Hadenock. He heard a voice call to him from the

water, "Richard ! Richard !" it seemed to cry
"Save me ! Revenge me !—Richard, Richard of
Woodville !"

He started suddenly up ; but the voice still
rang in his ears : "Richard of Woodville," it
said, or seemed to say.

"I hear," he exclaims. "Who calls?"

"What maiden is this thou hast with thee?"
asked the voice. "Beware ! Beware ! Love
will not be lightlied."

"Who is it that speaks?" demanded Richard
of Woodville, rubbing his eyes in surprise and
bewilderment. But no one answered, and all
was silence. "Surely, some one spoke," said
the young gentleman ; "if so, let them speak
again."

There was no reply ; and Woodville was
inclined to believe that his dream had been
prolonged after he had fancied himself awake ;
but, as he sat up and listened, he heard the
movement of some one amongst the straw at
the end of the room ; and, well aware that, if
any of the men were watchful, it must be he
who had the most mind, he exclaimed, "Ned
Dyram ! are you asleep?"

“No, sir,” replied the man; “I have been awake these ten minutes.”

“Did you hear any one speak just now?” demanded Woodville.

“To be sure I did,” answered Dyram. “Some one called you by your name—It was that which roused me. They asked about the maiden, Ella, and bade you beware. Foul fall them ! we have witches near.”

Richard of Woodville instantly sprang from his bed, and advanced towards the casement. The moon was still shining; but when the young gentleman gazed forth all without was in the still quiet of midnight. He could see the court of the hostel, and the angle of the building formed by a sort of wing which projected from the rest, close to where he stood; but all was calm; and not a creature seemed stirring. He looked up to the windows in the wing; but there was no light in any.

“Whence did the sound seem to come, Ned?” he asked.

“It seemed in the room,” replied the man. “Shall I strike a light? I have always wherewithal about me.”

Richard of Woodville bade him do so; and a lamp was soon lighted. But Ned Dyrham and his master searched the room in vain; and the other two inhabitants of the chamber slept soundly through all. At length, puzzled and disappointed, Woodville retired to bed again; and the light was extinguished; but the young gentleman did not sleep for some hours, listening eagerly for any sound. None made itself heard through the rest of the night, but the hard breathing of the sleeping yeomen; and, after watching till near morning, slumber once more fell upon Woodville's eyes, and he did not wake till the sun had been up an hour. The yeomen had already quitted the room without his having perceived it; and, dressing himself in haste, he proceeded to enquire of the host, what strangers had lodged in his house during the preceding night, besides himself and his own attendants?

"None, but a party of monks and nuns," the man replied, through the interpretation of Ella Brune, whom Woodville had called to his aid.

"Ask him, Ella, of what country they were,"

said Richard of Woodville. But the man replied to Ella's question, that they were all Hainaulters, except two who came from Friesland; and that they were going on a pilgrimage to Rome.

Richard of Woodville was more puzzled than ever. For a moment he suspected that Ned Dyram might have played some trick upon him; for, notwithstanding the bluntness of that worthy personage, a doubt of his being really as honest and straightforward as the King believed him, had entered into Woodville's mind, he knew not well why. Reflecting, however, on the fact of Ned Dyram having encouraged Ella Brune to accompany them to the continent, notwithstanding the opposite advice given by his master, the young gentleman soon rejected that suspicion, and remained as much troubled to account for what had occurred as before.

No farther information was to be obtained; and, as soon as his men and horses were prepared, Richard of Woodville commenced his journey towards Ghent; directing his steps in the first instance to Ghistel, through a country

which presented, at that period, nothing but wide uncultivated plains and salt marshes, with here and there a village raised on any little eminence, or a feudal castle near the shore, from which, even in those days, and still more in the times preceding, numerous bands of pirates were sent forth, sweeping the sea, and occasionally entering the mouths of the English rivers. The inhabitants of the whole tract, from Ostend to the Aa, were notorious for their savage and blood-thirsty character, so much so, indeed, as to have obtained the name of the Scythians of the North; and Ella Brune, as she rode beside Richard of Woodville, on one of the mules which he had brought with him, and which had been freed from its share of the baggage to bear her lighter weight, warned her companion to be upon his guard, as the passage through that part of the country was still considered unsafe, notwithstanding some improvement in the manners of the people.

At first Woodville only smiled, replying, that he thought a party of eleven stout Englishmen was sufficient to deal with any troop of rude

Flemings who might come against them. But she went on to give him many anecdotes of brutal outrages that had been committed within a very few years, which somewhat changed his opinion; and the appearance of a body of five or six horsemen, seemingly watching the advance of his little force, induced him to take some precautions. Halting within sight of the church of Lombards Heyde, he caused his archers to put on the cuirasses and salades with which they were provided for active service, and ordered them to have their bows ready for action at a moment's notice. He also partly armed himself, and directed the two pages to follow him close by with his casque, shield, and lance; and thus, keeping a firm array, the party moved forward to Ghistel, watched all the way along the road by the party they had at first observed, but without any attack being made. Their military display, indeed, proved in some degree detrimental to them, for that small town had been surrounded by ramparts some sixty or seventy years before, and the party of strangers was refused admission at the

gates. On the offer of payment, however, some of the inhabitants readily enough brought forth corn and water for the horses, and food and hydromel for the men. One or two of them could speak French also; and from them Richard of Woodville obtained clear directions for pursuing his way towards Ghent. He now found, that he had already somewhat deviated from the right track in coming to Ghistel at all; but as he was there, the men said that the best course for him to follow, was to cross the country direct by Erneghem, and thence march through the forest of Winendale, along the high raised causeway which commenced at the gates of Ghistel.

As no likelihood of obtaining any nearer place of repose presented itself, the young Englishman proceeded to follow these directions, and towards three o'clock of the same day reached the village of Erneghem. Much to his disappointment, however, he found no place of entertainment there. The inhabitants were mostly in the fields, and but little food was to be obtained for man or horse. On his

own account Richard of Woodville cared little, nor did he much heed his men being broken in to privations, which he well knew must often befall them ; but for Ella Brune he was more anxious, and expressed to her kindly his fears lest she should suffer from hunger and fatigue. But Ella laughed lightly, replying, “ I am more accustomed to it than any of you.”

Onward from that place, the march of the travellers was through the deep green wood, which, at that time, extended from a few miles to the south of Thorout, almost to the gates of Bruges. The soil was marshy, the road heavy, and full of sand ; but the weather was still beautifully clear, the sun shone bright and warm, a thousand wild flowers grew up under the shade, and the leafy branches of the forest offered no unpleasant canopy, even at that early period of the year. Neither village, nor house, nor woodman’s hut, nor castle tower, presented itself for several miles ; and as they approached a spot where the road divided into two, with no friendly indication to the weary traveller, of the place to which either tended, Richard of

Woodville turned towards Ella, asking — “Which, think you, I ought to follow, my fair maid? or had I better, like the knight-errant of old, give the choice up to my horse, and see what his sagacity will do, where my own entirely fails me?”

“What little I have,” replied Ella, “would be of no good, here; but I think, the best road to choose would be the most beaten one.”

“Often the safest, Ella,” replied Richard, with a smile.

“Yet not always the most pleasant,” answered Ella Brune. But, as she spoke, a human figure came in sight, the first that they had seen since they had left Erneghem. It was that of a stout monk, in a grey gown, with a large straw hat upon his head, tied with a riband under his beard. He was mounted upon a tall powerful ass, which was ambling along with him at a good pace; and though he pulled up, when he saw the large party of strangers pausing at the separation of the two roads, he came forward at a slower pace the next moment, and, after a careful inspection of the

young leader's person, saluted him courteously in the French tongue.—“Give you good day, and benedicite, my son,” he said, bowing his head. “You seem embarrassed about your way. Can I help you?”

“Infinitely, good father,” replied Richard of Woodville, “if you can direct me on the road. I am going to Ghent.”

“Why, you can never reach Ghent to-night, my son,” exclaimed the monk; “and you will find but poor lodging till you get to Thielt, which you will not reach till midnight, unless you ride hard.”

“We shall want both food and lodging long ere that, good father,” said Richard of Woodville. “Whither does this road you have just come up, lead?”

“To Aertrick,” replied the monk: “but you will get neither food nor beds there, my son, for so large a troop. 'Tis a poor place, and the priest is a poor man, who would lodge a single traveller, willingly enough, but has no room for more, nor bread to give them; but your best plan will be to come with me to Thorout. 'Tis

a little out of your way to Ghent; but yet you can reach that city to-morrow, if you will, though 'tis a long day's journey—well nigh ten leagues.”

“Is there a hostel in Thorout, good father?” asked Richard of Woodville.

“One of the most miserable in Flanders, Hainault, or Brabant,” answered the monk laughing; “but we have a priory there, where we are always willing to lodge strangers, and let them taste of our refectory. We are a poor order,” he continued, with a sly smile, “but yet we live in a rich country, and the people are benevolent to us, so that our board is not ill supplied; and strangers who visit us, always remember our poverty.”

“That we will do, most willingly,” said Richard of Woodville, “to the best of our ability, good father. But you see we have a lady with us. Now I have heard, that in some orders—”

“Ay, ay,” replied the monk laughing, “where the brotherhood are in sad doubt of their own virtue; but we are all grave and

sober men, and fear not to see a fair sister amongst us—as a visitor, as a visitor, of course,—it would be a want of Christian charity to send a fair lady from the gate, when she was in need of food and lodging. But come on, sir, if you will come; for we have still near a league to go, and 'tis well nigh the hour of supper, which this pious beast of mine knows right well. I had to drub him all the way to Aertrick, because he thought I had ought to be at vespers in the convent; and now he ambles me well nigh three leagues to the hour, because he knows that I ought to be back again. Oh, he has as much care of my conscience as a lady's father-director has of hers.—Come, my son, if you be coming;" and therewith he put his ass once more into a quick pace, and took the road to the right.

In little more than half an hour the whole party stood before the gates of a large heavy building, enclosed within high walls, situated at a short distance from the town of Thorout; and the good monk, leaving his new friends without, went in to speak with the prior in regard to

their reception. No great difficulty seemed to be made; and the prior himself, a white bearded, fresh complexioned old man, with a watery blue eye, well set in fat, came out to the door to welcome them. His air was benevolent; and his look, though somewhat more joyous than was perhaps quite in harmony with his vows, was by no means so unusual in his class as to call for any particular observation on the part of the young Englishman.

Far from displaying any scruples in regard to receiving Ella within those holy walls, he was the first to show himself busy, perhaps somewhat more than needful, in assisting her to dismount. It was evident that he was a great admirer of beauty in the other sex; but there were other objects for which he had an extreme regard; and one of those, in the form of the supper of the monastery, was already being placed upon the table of the refectory; so that there was no other course for him to pursue than to hasten the whole party in, to partake of the meal, only pausing to ask Richard of Woodville, with a glance at the black robe of serge and the white

wimple of Ella Brune, whether she was a sister of some English order.

Woodville replied simply that she was not, but merely a young maiden who was placed under his charge, to escort safely to Peronne, or perhaps Dijon, if she did not find her relations, who were attached to the court of Burgundy, at the former place.

The good prior was satisfied for the time, and led the way on to the refectory, where about twenty brethren were assembled, waiting with as eager looks for the commencement of the meal as if they had been fasting for at least four and twenty hours. To judge, however, from the viands to which they soon sat down, no such abstinence was usually practised; and capons, and roe-deer, and wild-boar pork, were in as great plenty on the table of the refectory as in the hall of a high English baron. Some distinction of rank, too, was here observed;* and the attendants of Richard of

* In many countries the distinction of station, if not of birth, was very strictly enforced, especially at meals; and I think it is Meyrick who mentions the ordonnance of some foreign prince, by which no one was permitted under the

Woodville were left to sup with the servants of the convent, somewhat to their surprise and displeasure. The monks in general seemed a cheerful and well-contented race; fond of good cheer and rich wine; and all but one or two, seemed to vie with each other in showing very courteous attention to poor Ella Brune, in which course the prior himself, and the brother questor, who had been Woodville's guide thither, particularly distinguished themselves.

There was one saturnine man, indeed, seated somewhat far down the table, with his head bent over his platter, who seemed to take little share in the hilarity of the others. From time to time he gave a side-long look towards Ella; but it was evidently not one of love or admiration; and Richard of Woodville was easily led to imagine that the good brother was somewhat scandalized at the presence of a woman in the convent. He asked the questor, who sat next to him, however, in a low voice, who that silent brother was; and it needed no farther ex-

grade of chivalry to sit at the table with a knight, unless he were a cross-bowman, the son of a knight.

planation to make the monk understand whom he meant.

“He is a Kill-joy,” replied the questor, with a significant look; “but he is none of our own people, though one of the order, from the abbey at Liege. He departs soon, God be praised; for he has done nothing but censure us since he came hither. His abbot sent him away upon a visitation, to get rid of him, I believe; for he was unruly there too, and declared that widgeons could not be eaten on even an ordinary fast-day without sin, though we all know the contrary.”

“He is not orthodox in that, at least,” answered Richard of Woodwille with a smile. “Doubtless he thinks it highly improper for a lady to have shelter here.”

“For that very reason,” said the questor, in the same low tone in which their conversation had been hitherto carried on, “the prior will have to lodge you in the visitor’s lodging, which you saw just by the gate; for he fears the reports of brother Paul. Otherwise he would have put you in the sub-prior’s rooms, he

being absent. But see, now he has done himself, how brother Paul watches every mouthful that goes down the throats of others!" The questor sank his voice to a whisper, adding, in a solemn tone, "He drinks no wine—nothing but water wets his lips! Is not that a sin?—a disparaging of the gifts of God?"

"It is, certainly, not using them discreetly," answered Richard of Woodville; "and methinks, in these low lands, a cup of generous wine, such as this is, must be even more necessary to a reverend monk, who spends half his time in prayer, than to a busy creature of the world, who has plenty of exercise to keep his blood flowing."

"To be sure it is!" replied the questor, who approved the doctrine highly; and thereupon he filled Woodville's can again, with a "Benedicite, noble sir."

When the meal was over, the young Englishman remarked, that this grim brother Paul, of whom they had been speaking, took advantage of the little interval which usually succeeds the pleasant occupation of eating, to draw the

prior aside, and whisper to him for several minutes. The face of the latter betrayed impatience and displeasure, and he turned from him with a somewhat mocking air, saying aloud, "You are mistaken, my brother, and not charitable, as you will soon see.—Hark ! there is the bell for complines. — Do you attend the service, sir ?"

The last words were addressed to Richard of Woodville, who bowed his head, and answered "Gladly I will."

"Oh, yes!" cried Ella, with a joyful look; "I shall be so pleased, if I may find place in the chapel. I have not had the opportunity of hearing any service since I left London."

"Assuredly, my daughter!" said the prior with a gracious look; "the chapel is open to all. We have our own place; but every day we have the villagers and townsfolk to hear our chanting, which we are somewhat vain of. You shall be shown how to reach it with your friends."

The monks took their way to the chapel by a private door from the refectory; and Richard of

Woodville, with Ella, was led by a lay brother of the monastery through the court. Two or three women and one old man were in the chapel, and the short evening service began and ended, the sweet voice of Ella Brune mingling sounds with the choir which, well I wot, the place had not often heard before. At the close, Richard of Woodville moved towards the door; but Ella besought him to stay one moment, and, advancing to the shrine of Our Lady, knelt down and prayed devoutly, with her beads in her hand. Perhaps she might ask for a prosperous journey, and for deliverance from danger; or she might entreat support and guidance in an undertaking that occupied the dearest thoughts of an enthusiastic heart; nor will there be many found to blame her, even if the higher aspirations, the holier and purer impulses that separate the spirit from the earth and lead the soul to Heaven, were mingled with the mortal affections that cling around us to the end, so long as we are bondsmen of the clay.

While she yet prayed, and while the monks were wending away through their own par-

ticular entrance, the old prior advanced to Woodville, who was standing near the door, and remarked, "Our fair sister seems of a devout and Catholic spirit. These are bad days, and there are many that swerve from the true faith."

At these words a conviction, very near the truth, broke upon Woodville's mind, as he recollected what Ella had told him of the opinions of old Murdock Brune and of his relations in Liege, and combined her account with the whispering of brother Paul, a monk from that very city. It was a sudden flash of perception, rather than the light of cold consideration; and he replied, without a moment's pause, "She is, indeed, a sincere and pious child of the Holy Roman Catholic Church; and she has been much tried, as you would soon perceive, reverend sir, if you knew all; for she has relations who have long since abandoned the faith of their fathers, and would fain have persuaded her to adopt their own vain and heretical opinions; but she has been firm and constant, even to her own injury in their esteem, poor maiden!"

“Ay, I thought so, I thought so!” replied the prior, rubbing his fat white hands. “See how she prays to the Blessed Virgin; and the Queen of Heaven will hear her prayers. She always has especial grace for those who kneel at that altar.—Good night, brother;—good night! The questor and the refectiener will show you your lodging, and give you the sleeping cup. To-morrow I will see you ere you depart. God’s blessing upon you, daughter,” he added, as Ella approached. “I must away, for that father Paul has us all up to matins.”

Thus saying, the old monk retired; and in the court Woodville found his friend the questor and another brother, who led him and his attendants to what was called the visitor’s lodging, where, with a more comfortable bed than the night before, he slept soundly, only waking for a few moments as the matin bell rang, and then dropping asleep again, to waken shortly after daylight and prepare for his journey onward.

When he came to depart, however, there was one drawback to the remembrance of the pleasant evening he had passed in the monastery.

A stout mule was saddled in the court, and the prior besought him in courteous terms to give the advantage of his escort to father Paul, who was about to set out likewise for Ghent. Richard of Woodville could not well refuse, though not particularly pleased, and placing a liberal return for his entertainment in the box of the convent, he began his journey, resolved to make the best of a companionship which he could not avoid.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

ALL was bustle in the good old town of Ghent, as Richard of Woodville and his train rode in. It was at all times a gay and busy place; and even now, when much of its commerce has passed away from it, what a cheerful and lively scene does its market-place present on a summer's day, with the tall houses rising round, and breaking the line of the sunshine into fantastic forms, and the innumerable groups of men and women standing to gossip or to traffic, or moving about in many-coloured raiment! On that day, however, military display was added to the usual gaiety of the scene, and to the ordinary municipal pageants of the time. Horsemen in arms were riding

through the streets, lances were seen here and there, and pennons fluttered on the wind, while every now and then attendants in gay dresses, with the arms of Burgundy embroidered upon breast and back, passed along with busy looks and an important air.

The young Englishman took his way under the direction of brother Paul—who had shown himself upon the journey more courteous and conversable than had been expected—towards the principal hostelry of the place; and Ghent at that time possessed many; but he was twice forced to stop in his advance by the crowds, who seemed to take little notice of him and his train, so fully occupied were they with some other event of the day. The first interruption was caused by a long train of priests and monks going to some church, with all the splendid array of the Roman Catholic clergy, followed by an immense multitude of idle gazers; and hardly had they passed, when the procession of the trades, walking on foot, with banners displayed, and guards in armour, and ensigns of the different companies, crossed the

path of the travellers, causing them to halt for a full quarter of an hour, while the long line moved slowly on.

“Is this any day of peculiar festival, brother Paul?” demanded Richard of Woodville; “the good citizens of Ghent seem in holiday.”

“None that I know of,” replied the monk, “but I will ask;” and, pushing on his mule to the side of one of the more respectable artisans, he enquired the cause of the procession of the trades.

“They are going to compliment the Count de Charolois,” answered the man, “and to ask his recognition of their charters and privileges. He arrived only this morning.”

“That is fortunate, Ella,” said Woodville, as soon as he was informed of this reply, “both for you and for me. Your father’s cousin will, most likely, be with him; and I seek the Count myself.”

Brother Paul seemed to listen attentively to what his companions said; but he made no remark; and as soon as the procession had passed, they rode on, and were soon housed

comfortably for the night. The monk left them at the inn door, thanking the young English gentleman for his escort, and retired to the abbey of St. Bavon.

The hour of the day was somewhat late for Richard of Woodville to present himself before the Count de Charolois, and he also judged that it might be more prudent to visit in the first place the agent of the King of England—the well-known diplomatist of that day, Sir Philip Morgan, or de Morgan—if it should chance that he had accompanied the Count to Ghent. That he had done so, indeed, seemed by no means improbable, as Woodville had learned since his arrival in Flanders, that the Duke of Burgundy himself was absent in the French capital, and that the chief rule of his Flemish territory was entrusted to his son. The host of the inn, however, could tell him nothing about the matter; all he knew was, that the Count had arrived that morning unexpectedly, accompanied by a large train, and that instead of taking up his abode in the Cour des Princes, which had of late years

become the residence of the Counts of Flanders, he had gone to what was called the Vieux Bourg, or old castle, of the Flemish princes. He offered to send a man to enquire if a person bearing the hard name which his English guest had pronounced, was with the Count's company; and Richard of Woodville had just got through the arrangements of a first arrival, and was taking a hasty meal, when the messenger returned, saying that Sir Philip de Morgan was with the Count, and was lodged in the left gate tower entering from the court.

"I will go to him at once, Ella," he said, "and before my return you had better bethink you of what course you will pursue, in case your kinsman should not be with the count. I will leave you for the present under the charge of Ned Dyram here, who will see that no harm happens to you in this strange town."

"Oh! it is not strange to me," replied Ella Brune. "We once staid here for a month, noble sir; and, as to bethinking me of what I shall do, I have bethought me already, but will not stay you to speak about it now."

Thus saying, she suffered him to depart, without giving him any charge to enquire after her kinsman, being somewhat more than indifferent, to say the truth, as to whether Richard of Woodville found him or not. When the young gentleman had departed, and the meal was concluded, Ned Dyram, though he had taken care to show no great pleasure at the task which his master had given him to execute, besought his fair companion to walk forth with him into the town, and urged her still, notwithstanding the plea of weariness which she offered for retiring to her own chamber.

“I wish to purchase some goods,” he said, “and shall never make myself understood, fair Ella, unless I have you with me.”

“Oh ! every one in this town speaks French,” replied Ella Brune ; “for since the country fell to one of the royal family of France, that tongue has become the fashion amongst the nobles ; and the traders are obliged to learn it, to speak with them.”

“But I must not go out and leave you,”

replied Ned Dyrham, "after the charge my young lord has laid upon me;" and as he still pressed her to accompany him, Ella, who felt that she owed him some gratitude, for having forwarded her schemes so far, at length consented; and they issued forth together into the streets of Ghent.

As soon as they were free from the presence of the other attendants of Richard of Woodville, the manner of her companion towards Ella became very different. There was a tenderness in his tones, and in his words, an expression of admiration in his countenance, which he had carefully avoided displaying before others; and the poor girl felt somewhat grieved and annoyed, although, as there was nothing coarse or familiar in his demeanour, she felt that she had no right to be displeased.

"The lowliest may love the highest," she thought; "and in station he is better than I am. Why, then, should I feel angry?—And yet I wish this had not been; it may mar all my plans. How can I check it? and if I

do, may he not divine all the rest, and, in his anger, do what he can to thwart me?— I will treat it lightly. Heaven pardon me, if I dissemble !”

“What are you thinking of so deeply, fair maiden?” asked Ned Dyram, marking the reverie into which she had fallen. “You do not seem to listen to what I say.”

“As much as it is worth, Master Dyram,” replied Ella, in a gay tone; “but I must check you; you are too rapid in your sweet speeches. Do you not know, that he who would become a true servant to a lady, must have long patience, and go discreetly to work? Oh! I am not to be won more easily than my betters! Poor as I am, I am as proud as any lady of high degree, and will have slow courtship and humble suit before I am won.”

“You shall have all that you wish, fair Ella,” answered Ned Dyram, “if you will but smile upon my suit !”

“Smile !” exclaimed Ella, with the same light manner. “Did ever man dream of such a thing so soon! Why, you may think yourself highly

favoured, if you get a smile within three months. The first moon is all sighing—the next is all beseeching—the next, hoping and fearing; and then perchance a smile may come, to give hope encouragement. A kind word may follow at the end of the fourth month and so on. But the lady who could be wholly won before three years, is unworthy of regard.—However, Master Dyram,” she continued in a graver tone, “you must make haste to purchase what you want, for I am over-weary to walk further over these rough stones.”

Just as she spoke, brother Paul passed them, in company with a secular priest; and, although he took no notice of his fellow travellers, walking on as if he did not see them, the quick eye of Ned Dyram perceived with a glance that the priest and the monk had stopped, and were gazing back, talking earnestly together.

“That dull shaveling loves us not, fair Ella,” said Ned Dyram. “He is one of your haters of all men, I should think.”

“I have seen his face somewhere before,”

answered Ella Brune; "but I know not well where. 'Tis not a pleasant picture to look upon, certainly, but he may be a good man for all that.—Come, Master Dyram, what is it you want to buy? Here are stalls enough around us now; and if you do not choose speedily, I must turn back to the inn, and leave you to find your way through Ghent alone."

"Then, first," said Ned Dyram, "I would buy a clasp to fasten the hood round your fair face."

"What!" exclaimed Ella in a tone of merry anger; "accept a present within a week of having seen you first!" Nay, nay, servant of mine, that is a grace you must not expect for months to come. No, if that be all you want, I shall turn back," and she did so accordingly; but Ned Dyram had accomplished as much of his object as he had hoped or expected, for that day, at least. He had spoken of love with Ella Brune; and, although what a great seer of the human heart has said, that "talking of love is not making it" may be true, yet it is undoubtedly a very great step to that pleasant consummation.

But Ned Dyrham had done more; he had overstepped the first great barrier; and Ella now knew that he loved her. He trusted to time and opportunity for the rest; and he was not one to doubt his skill in deriving the greatest advantage from both.

The foolish and obtuse are often deceived by others; the shrewd and quick are often deceived by themselves. Without that best of all qualities of the mind, strong common sense, there is little to choose between the two: for if the dull man has in the world to contend with a thousand knaves, the quick one has in his own heart to contend with a thousand passions; and, perhaps, the domestic cheats are the most dangerous, after all. There is not so great a fool on the earth as a clever man, when he is one; and Ned Dyrham was one of that class so frequently to be found in all ages, whose abilities are sometimes serviceable to others, but are rarely, if ever, found serviceable to themselves.

Ella had used but little art towards him, but that which all women use, or would use, under

such circumstances. Her first great thought was to conceal the love she felt ; and where—when it becomes necessary so to do—is there a woman who will not find a thousand disguises to hide it from all eyes ? But to him especially she was anxious to suffer no feeling of her bosom to appear ; for she had speedily discovered, by a sort of intuition rather than observation—or, perhaps by a quickness in the perception of small traits which often seems like intuition—that he was keen and cunning beyond his seeming ; and now she had a double motive for burying every secret deep in her own heart. She laid out no plan, indeed, for her future conduct towards him ; she thought not what she would say, or what she would do ; and if, in her after course, she employed aught like wile against his wiles, it was done on the impulse of the moment, and not on any predetermined scheme.

Ned Dyrham had remarked his master's conduct well, since Ella had been their companion ; he had seen that Woodville had been sincere in the opinion he had expressed, that it would be

better for her to remain in England; and the very calm indifference which he had displayed on finding her in the ship with himself, had proved to him, both that there had never been any love passages between them ere he knew either, as he had imagined when first he was sent to London, and thus there was no chance of the young gentleman's kindly sympathy for the fair girl he protected, growing into a warmer feeling. He read the unaffected conduct of his master aright; but to that of Ella Brune he had been more blind, partly because he was deceived by his own passions, partly because, in this instance, he had a much deeper and less legible book to read—a woman's heart: and, though naturally of a clear-sighted and even suspicious mind, he saw not, in the slightest degree, the real impulses on which she acted.

Contented therefore with the progress he had made, he purchased some articles of small value at one of the stalls which they passed, and returned to the inn with his fair companion, who, at once sought her chamber, and retired to rest, without waiting for Richard of

Woodville's return. Then sitting down in a dark corner of the hall, in which several of his companions were playing at tables, and two or three other guests listening to a tale in broad Flemish, delivered by the host, Dyram turned in his mind all that had passed between him and Ella, and, with vanity to aid him, easily persuaded himself that his suit would find favour in her eyes. He saw, indeed, that the rash and licentious thoughts which he had at one time entertained in regard to her when he found her poor, solitary, and unprotected, at a hostel in the liberties of the city, were injurious to her; but as his character was one of those too ordinary and debased ones, which value all things by the difficulty of attainment, he felt the more eagerly inclined to seek her, and to take any means to make her his, because he found her less easy to be obtained than he had at first imagined.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXILE.

AT one side of a small square or open space, in the town of Ghent, rose a large pile of very ancient architecture, called the Graevensteen, for many centuries the residence of the Counts of Flanders. Covering a wide extent of ground with its walls and towers, the building ran back almost to the banks of the Liève, over which a bridge was thrown, communicating with the castle on one side and the suburbs on the other. In front, towards the square, and projecting far before the rest of the pile, was a massive castellated gate of stone, flanked by high towers, rising to a considerable height. The aspect of the whole was gloomy and stern; but the gay scene before the gates—the guards,

the attendants, the pages in the bright-coloured and splendid costumes, particularly affected by the house of Burgundy—relieved the forbidding aspect of the dark portal, contrasting brilliantly, though strangely, with its sombre and prison-like air.

At a small light wicket, in a sort of balustrade, or screen, of richly sculptured stone, which separated the palace from the rest of the square, stood two or three persons, some of them in arms, others dressed in the garb of peace; and Richard of Woodville, with his guide, approaching one who seemed to be the porter, enquired if Sir Philip de Morgan could be spoken with.

“Pass in,” was the brief reply:—“the door in the court, on the left of the gate;” and walking on, they took their way under the deep arch, and found in one of the towers a small low door of massive oak, studded with huge bosses of iron. No one was in attendance; and this door being partially open, was pushed back by Richard of Woodville, who bade the guide wait below, while he mounted the narrow stairs,

the foot of which was seen before him. At the first story another open door presented itself, displaying a little ante-room, with two or three servants seated round a table, playing at cross and pile, a game which, by this time, had descended from kings to lacqueys. Entering at once, the young gentleman, using the French tongue, demanded to speak with Sir Philip de Morgan; but the servants continued their game with that sort of cold indifference which Englishmen of an inferior class have, in all ages, been accustomed to show towards foreigners: one of them replying, in very bad French, and hardly lifting his head from the game, "He can't be spoken with—he is busy!" adding in English to his fellow, "Play on, Wilfred."

"How now, knave!" exclaimed Richard of Woodville in his own tongue; "Methinks you are saucy!—Rise this moment, and inform your master that a gentleman from the King of England desires to speak with him."

The man instantly started up, replying, "I beg your pardon, sir; I did not know you.

I thought it was some of those Flemish hogs, come to speak about the vellum."

"Learn to be civil to all men, sir," replied Richard of Woodville, "and that a serving man is as much below an honest trader as the trader is below his lord. Go and do as I have told you."

The lacquey retired by a door opposite, leaving a smile upon the faces of his fellows at the lecture he had received; and after being absent not more than a minute, he re-opened the door, saying, "Follow me, noble sir; Sir Philip will see you."

Passing through another small chamber, in which a pale thin man in a black robe, with a shaven crown, was sitting, busily copying some papers, Richard of Woodville was ushered into a larger room poorly furnished. At a table in the midst, was seated a corpulent, middle-aged personage, with a countenance which at first sight seemed dull and heavy. The nose, the cheeks, the lips, were fat and protruding; and the thick shaggy eyebrows hung so far over the eyes, as almost to conceal them. The

forehead, however, was large and fine, somewhat prominent just about the brow and over the nose; and when the eye could be seen, though small and grey, there was a bright and piercing light in it, which frequently accompanies high intellect. He was dressed in the plainest manner, and in dark colours, with a furred gown over his shoulders, and a small black velvet cap upon his head; nor would it have been easy, for any one unacquainted with his real character, to divine that in that coarse and somewhat repulsive form was to be found one of the greatest diplomatists of his age.

Sir Philip de Morgan rose as soon as Richard of Woodville entered, bowing his head with a courtly inclination, and desiring his visitor to be seated. As soon as the servant had closed the door, he began the conversation himself, saying, "My knave tells me, sir, you come from the King. It might have been more prudent not to say so."

"Why, good faith, Sir Philip," replied Woodville, "without saying so, there was but little chance of seeing you; for you have some

saucy vermin here, who thought fit to pay but little attention to my first words; and moreover, as I have letters from the King for the Count de Charolois, which must be publicly delivered, concealment was of little use, and could last but a short time."

"That alters the case," answered Sir Philip de Morgan. "As to my knaves, they must be taught to use their eyes, though a little insolence is not altogether objectionable; but you mentioned letters for the Count. I presume you have some for me?"

"I have," answered Richard of Woodville, putting his hand into the gibecière, or pouch, which was slung over his right shoulder and under his left arm, by an embroidered band. "This, from the King, sir;" and he placed Henry's letter in the envoy's hand.

Sir Philip de Morgan took it, cut the silk with his dagger, and drew forth the two sheets which it contained. The first which he looked at was brief; and the second, which was folded and sealed, with two words written in the corner, he did not open, but laid aside.

“So, Master Woodville,” he said, after this examination, “I find you have come to win your golden spurs in Burgundy. What lies in me to help you, I will do. To-morrow I will make you known to the Count de Charolois. I was well acquainted with your good father, and your lady mother too. She was the sister, if I recollect, of the good knight of Dunbury, a very noble gentleman;” and then, turning from the subject, he proceeded, with quiet and seemingly unimportant questions, to gain all the knowledge that he could from Richard of Woodville regarding the court of England, and the character, conduct, and popularity of the young King. But his visitor, as the reader may have seen in earlier parts of this true history, though frank and free in his own case, and where no deep interests were concerned, was cautious and on his guard in matters of greater moment. He was not sent thither to babble of the King’s affairs; and though he truly represented his Sovereign, as highly popular with all classes, and deservedly so, Sir Philip de Morgan gained little farther information from him on any of

the many points, in regard to which the diplomatist would fain have penetrated the monarch's designs before he thought fit to communicate them.

The high terms in which Henry had been pleased to speak of the gentleman who bore his letter, naturally induced the envoy to set down his silence to discretion, rather than to want of knowledge; and he observed, after his enquiries had been parried more than once, "You are, I see, prudent and reserved in your intelligence, Master Woodville."

"It is easy to be so, fair sir," answered his visitor, "when one has nothing to communicate. Doubtless the King has told you all, without leaving any part of his will for me to expound. At least, if he did, he informed me not of it; and I have nothing more to relate."

"What! not one word of France?" asked the knight with a smile.

"Not one!" replied Woodville calmly.

The envoy smiled again. "Well," he said, "then to-morrow, at noon, I will go with you to the Count, if you will be here. Doubtless we

shall hear more of your errand, from the letters you bear to that noble Prince."

"I do not know," replied Woodville, rising; "but, at the same time, I would ask you to send some one with me to find out the dwelling of one Sir John Grey, if he be now in Ghent."

"Sir John Grey!" said de Morgan, musing, as if he had never heard the name before. "I really cannot tell you where to find such a person: there is none of that name here.—Is he a friend of your own?"

"No!" answered Richard of Woodville; "I never saw him."

"Then you have letters for him, I presume," rejoined the other. "What says the superscription? Does it not give you more clearly his place of abode? This town contains many a street and lane: I have only been here these eight hours since several years; and he may well be in the place, and I not know it."

Woodville drew forth the King's letter, and gazed at the writing on the back; while Sir Philip de Morgan, who had risen likewise, took a silent step round, and glanced over his arm.

“Ha! the King’s own writing,” he said. “Sir John Grey!—I remember there is, I believe, an old countryman of ours, living near what is called the Sas de Gand, of the name of Mortimer. He has been here some years; and if there be a man in Ghent who can tell you where to find this Sir John Grey, ’tis he. Nay, I think you may well trust the letter in his hands to deliver. — Stay, I will send one of my knaves with you, who knows the language and the manners of this people well.”

“I thank you, noble sir,” replied his visitor; “but I have a man waiting for me, who will conduct me, if you will but repeat the direction that you gave—near the Sas de Gand, I think you said?”

“Just so,” replied Sir Philip de Morgan drily; “but not quite so far. It is a house called the house of Waerschoot;—but it is growing late; in less than an hour it will be dark. You had better delay your visit till to-morrow, when you will be more sure of admission; for he is of a moody and somewhat strange fantasy, and not always to be seen.”

“ I will try, at all events, to-night,” replied Richard of Woodville. “ I can but go back to-morrow, if I fail. Farewell, Sir Philip, I will be with you at noon ;”—and, after all the somewhat formal courtesies and leave-takings of the day, he retired from the chamber of the King’s envoy, and sought the guide who had conducted him thither.

The man was soon found, talking to one of the inferior attendants of the Count of Charolois; and, calling him away, Richard of Woodville directed him to lead to the house which Sir Philip de Morgan had indicated. The guide replied, in a somewhat dissatisfied tone, that it was a long way off; but a word about his reward, soon quickened his movements; and issuing through the gates of the city, they followed a lane through the suburbs on the northern side of the Lys.

A number of fine houses were built at that time beyond the actual walls of Ghent; for the frequent commotions which took place in the town, and the little ceremony with which the citizens were accustomed to take the life

of any one against whom popular wrath had been excited, rendered it expedient in the eyes of many of the nobles of Flanders, to lodge beyond the dangerous fortifications, which were as often used to keep in an enemy, as to keep one out. Many of these were modern buildings, but others were of a far more ancient date; and at length, as it was growing dusk, the young Englishman's guide stopped at the gate of one of the oldest houses they had yet seen, and struck two or three hard blows upon the large heavy door. For some time nothing but a hollow sound made answer; and looking up, Richard of Woodville examined the mansion, which seemed going fast into a state of decay. It had once been one of the strong battlemented dwellings of some feudal lord; and heavy towers, and numberless turrets, seemed to show that the date of its first erection went back to a time when the city of Ghent, confined to its own walls, had left the houses which were built beyond them surrounded only by the uncultivated fields and pastures, watered by the Scheld, the Lys, and the Liève. The walls

still remained solid, though the sharp cutting of the round arches had mouldered away in the damp atmosphere ; and the casements above—for externally there were none on the lower story—were, in many instances, destitute of even the small lozenges of glass, which, in those days, were all that even princely mansions could boast.

After waiting more than a reasonable time, the guide knocked loud again, and, looking round for a bell, at length found a rope hanging under the arch, which he pulled violently. While it was still in his hand, a stout Flemish wench appeared, and demanded what they wanted, that they made so much noise ? Her words, indeed, were unintelligible to the young Englishman ; but guessing their import, he directed the guide to enquire, if an Englishman, of the name of Mortimer, lived there ? A nod, of the head, which accompanied her reply, showed him that it was in the affirmative ; and he then, by the same intervention, told her to let her master know, that a gentleman from England wished to see him.

The girl laughed, and shook her head, saying

something which, when it came to be translated, proved to be, that she knew he would not see any one of the kind ; but, though it was of no use, she would go and enquire ; and away she consequently ran with good-humoured speed, showing, as she went, a pair of fat, white legs, with no other covering than that with which nature had furnished them.

She returned in a minute, with a look of surprise ; and bade the strangers follow her, which they did, into the court. There, however, Woodville again directed his guide to wait, and under the pilotage of the Flemish maid, entered upon a sea of passages, till at length, catching him familiarly by the hand to guide him in the darkness that reigned within, she led him up a flight of stairs, and opened a door at the top. Before him lay a small room, ornamented with richly carved oak, the lines and angles of which caught faintly the light proceeding from a lamp upon the table ; and, standing in the midst of the room, with a look of eager impatience, was a man, somewhat advanced in life, though younger than Woodville had expected to see. His

hair, it is true, was white, and his beard, which he wore long, was nearly so likewise; but he was upright, and seemingly firm in limb and muscle.* His face had furrows on it, too; but they seemed more those of care and thought than age; and his eye was clear, undimmed, and flashing.

“Well, sir! well!” he said in English, as soon as Richard of Woodville entered; “What news?—Why has she not come herself?”

“You are, I fear, under a mistake,” replied the young Englishman. “I came to you for information—not to give any.”

The other cast himself back into his seat, and covered his eyes with his hands, as Woodville spoke. The next moment he withdrew his hands, and the whole expression of his countenance was altered. Nothing appeared but a look of dull and thoughtful reserve, with a slight touch of disappointment.

As he spoke not, Richard of Woodville went on to say, “Sir Philip de Morgan directed me, sir—”

* His after advancement to the Earldom of Tankerville was won by deeds of arms, which shews that he must have been still hale and robust at this time.

“Ay! — he has his eye ever upon me,” exclaimed the other, interrupting him. “What does he seek—what is there now to blame?”

“Nothing, that I am aware of,” answered Woodville; “it is on my own business he directed me here; not on yours or his.”

“Indeed!” said the other, with a softened look. “And what is there for your pleasure, sir?”

“He informed me,” replied his visitor, “that if there be a man in Ghent, it is yourself, who can tell me where to find one Sir John Grey, an English knight, supposed to be resident here.”

“And may I ask your business with him?” enquired Mortimer coldly.

“Nay,” answered Woodville; “that will be communicated to himself. I cannot see how it would stead you, to know ought concerning it.”

“No!” replied Mortimer; “but it might stead him. A good friend, sir, to a man in danger, may stand like a barbican, as it were, before a fortress, encountering the first attack of the enemy. I say not that I know where Sir John Grey is to be found; but I do say, and at

once, that I would not tell, if I did, till I had heard the motive of him who seeks him. He has been a wronged and persecuted man, sir; and it is fit that no indiscretion should lay him open to further injury."

Woodville fixed his eyes intently upon his companion's countenance; and, after a moment's pause, he said, in an assured tone, "I speak to Sir John Grey even now.—Concealment is vain, sir, and needless; for I do but bring you a letter from the young King of England, which I promised to deliver with all speed; and if things be as I think, it will not prove so ungrateful to you as you may expect. Am I not right?—for I must have your own admission ere I give the letter."

"The letter!" repeated the other; and again a look of eagerness came over his countenance. "You bear a letter, then? You are keen, young man," he added; "but yet you look honest."

"I do assure you, sir," replied Woodville, "that I have no end or object on earth, but to give the letter with which I am charged to Sir John Grey himself. I am anxious moreover to

do it speedily, for so I was directed; and I have therefore come to-night, without waiting for repose. If you be he, as I do believe, you may tell me so in safety, and rest upon the honour of an English gentleman."

"Honour!" said his companion, with a sad and bitter shake of the head. "I have no cause to trust in honour: it has become but a mere name, the meaning of which has been lost long ago, and each man interprets it as he likes best. In former times, honour was a thing as immutable as the diamond, which nought could change to any other form. 'Twas truth,—'twas right,—'twas the pure gold of the high heart. Now, alas! men have devised alloy; and the metal, be it as base as copper, passes current for the value that is stamped upon it by society. Honour is no longer independent of man's will; 'tis that which people call it, and no more. The liar, who, with a smooth face, wrongs his friend in the most tender point, is still a man of honour with the world: the traitor, who betrays his country or his King, so that it be for passion, and not gold, is still a man of honour,

and will cut your throat if you deny it: the calumniator, who blasts another's reputation with a sneer, is still a man of honour if he's brave. Honour's a name that changes colour, like the Indian beast, according to the light it is viewed in. Now it is courage; now it is rank; now it is riches; now it is fine raiment or a swaggering air. Once it was Truth, young sir."

"And is ever so, in reality," replied Richard of Woodville; "the rest are all counterfeits, which only pass with men who know no better. It is of this honour that I speak, sir. However, as you know me not, I cannot expect you to attribute to me qualities that are indeed now rare; yet, holding myself bound by that very honour which we speak of, to deliver the letter that I bear, to no one but him for whom it was destined, unless you tell me, you are indeed that person, I must carry it back with me."

"Stay!—what is your name?" demanded the other—"that may give me light."

"My name is Richard of Woodville," answered his visitor.

"Ha! Richard of Woodville!" cried the

stranger, with a look of joy, grasping his hand warmly. "Give it me—give it me—quick! I am Sir John Grey. How fares she?—where is she?—why did she not come?"

"I know not of whom you speak," replied Woodville—"this letter is from the King;" and, drawing it forth, he put it into his companion's hand.

"From the King!" exclaimed Sir John Grey—"from the King!—a letter to me!"—and he held the packet to the lamp, and gazed on the superscription attentively. "True, indeed!" he said at length, cutting the silk. "'Our trusty and well-beloved!'"—a style I have not heard for years;" and, bending his head over it, he perused the contents, which were somewhat long.

Woodville gazed at his face while he read, and marked the light and shade of many varied emotions come across it. Now, the eye strained eagerly at the first lines, and the brow knit; now, a proud smile curled the lip; and now, the eyelids showed a tear.—But presently, as he proceeded, all haughtiness passed away

from his look—he raised his eyes to heaven, as if in thankfulness; and at the end let fall the paper on the table, and clasped his hands together, exclaiming, “Praise to thy name, Most Merciful!—The dark hour has come to an end!”

Then, stretching forth his open arms to Richard of Woodville, he said, “Let me take you to my heart, messenger of joy!—you have brought me life!”

“I am overjoyed to be that messenger, Sir John,” replied Woodville, “but, in truth, I was ignorant of what I carried. I did but guess, indeed, from my knowledge of the King’s great soul, that he would not be so eager that this should reach you soon, if the tidings it contained were evil.”

“They are home to the exile,” replied the knight; “wealth to the beggar; grace and station to the disgraced and fallen; the reversal of all his father’s bitter acts; the generous out-pouring of a true royal heart! Noble, noble prince! God requite me with misery eternal, if I do not devote every moment that

remains of this short life to do you signal service. And you, too, my friend," he continued, taking his visitor's hand—"so you are the man who, choosing by the heart alone, setting rank, and wealth, and name aside, looking but to loveliness and worth, sought the hand of a poor and portionless girl—the daughter of a proscribed and banished fugitive?"

"Good faith, Sir John!" replied the young gentleman, gazing upon him with a look of no small surprise and pleasure—"I begin to see light; but I have been so long in darkness, that my eyes are dazzled. Can it be that I see my fair Mary's father—the father of Mary Markham—in Sir John Grey?"

But the knight's attention had been turned back to the letter, with that abrupt transition which the mind is subject to, when suddenly moved by joy so unexpected as almost to be rendered doubtful by its very intensity. "I cannot believe it," he said; "yet, who should deceive me? It is royal, too, in every word."

"It is the King's own hand that wrote it," replied Richard of Woodville; "and if there

be ought that is high and generous therein—ought that speaks a soul above the ordinary crowd—ought that is marked as fitting for a King, who values royalty but for extended power to do good and redress wrong—set it down with full assurance as a proof, that it is Henry's own!—But you have not answered me as to that dear lady.”

“She is my child, Richard,” said Sir John Grey; “and if you are worthy, as I believe you, she shall be your wife. You chose her in lowliness and poverty; she shall be yours in wealth and honour. But tell me more about her. When did you see her? Why has she not come?”

“The last question I cannot answer,” replied Richard of Woodville; “for, though I heard her father had sent for her, I knew not who that father was, or where; but——”

“So, then, she never told you?” asked the knight.

“Never,” answered Woodville, “nor my good uncle, either; but I saw her, some eight or nine days since, in Westminster, well and

happy. I have heard since, however, by a servant whom I sent up, that she and Sir Philip had returned in haste to Dunbury, upon some sudden news."

"Ay!—so then, they have missed the men I sent," replied Sir John Grey. "I despatched a servant—the only one I had—three weeks since, together with some merchants, who were going to trade in London, and who promised on their return, which was to be without delay, to bring her with them."

"Stay!" exclaimed Woodville. "Had they not a freight of velvets and stuffs of gold?"

"The same," answered the knight. "What of them?"

"They were taken by pirates, in the mouth of the Thames," replied Richard of Woodville; "I heard the news in Winchester, when I was purchasing housings for my horses.—But be not alarmed for your dear child. She is safe. I saw her afterwards; and good Sir Philip seemed to marvel much, why some persons whom he expected had not yet arrived. Had he told me more, I could have given him tidings of

them; put your mind at ease on her account, for she is still with Sir Philip."

"But that poor fellow, the servant!" answered the knight sadly; "my heart is ill at rest for him. Misfortune teaches us to value things more justly than prosperity. A true and faithful friend, whatever be his station, is a treasure indeed, not to be lost without a bitter pang. I must thank God that my dear child is safe; yet, I cannot forget him."

"They will put him to ransom with the rest," replied Richard of Woodville. "I heard they had carried the merchants and their vessel to some port in the north, and, doubtless, you will soon hear of him. I did not learn that there was any violence committed; for, though they are usually hard and cruel men, they are even more avaricious than bloodthirsty."

"God send it!" exclaimed Sir John Grey. I wonder that your noble kinsman, when he heard that you were about to cross the sea, did not charge you with Mary's guidance hither. It would have been more safe."

"But you forget," replied Woodville, "that

I was ignorant of all concerning her. I thought she was an orphan till within the last ten days—or, perhaps, not so well placed as that. Besides, my uncle would not countenance our love; and, indeed, that was his reason; for I remember he said, that he wished we had not been such fools as to be caught by one another's eyes;—that it would have saved him much embarrassment.”

Sir John Grey smiled, saying—“That is so much the man I left. He had even then outlived the memory of his own young days when lady's love was all his thought but arms, and looked upon everything, but that lofty and more shadowy devotion to the fair, which was the soul of olden chivalry, as little better than youthful idleness. He kept you, then, even to the last, without knowledge of her fate and history?—He did well, too, for so I wished it; but I will now tell you all—and there is not, indeed, much to say. I raised my lance, with the rest, for my sovereign, King Richard; was taken and pardoned; but swore no allegiance to one, whom I could not but hold

as an usurper. When occasion served again, I was not slack to do the same once more, and, with my friends, fought the lost battle of Shrewsbury. My life was saved by a poor faithful fellow of our army, who gave his own, I fear, for mine; and flying, more fortunately than others, I escaped to this land. Here I soon heard that I was proclaimed a traitor, my estate seized, my name attainted, and my child sought for to make her a ward of the crown, and to give her and the fortune which her mother inherited to some minion of the court. She was then a mere child, and, by your uncle's kindly care, was taken first to Wales, and thence brought to his own house, where he has ever treated her as a daughter. I lingered on in this and other lands from year to year; and many an effort was made to entrap or drive me back into the net. The King of France was instigated to expel me from his dominions; the Duke of Burgundy was moved to follow his example, but would not so debase himself to any king on earth. But why should I tell all that I have suffered? Every

art was used, and every means of persecution tried, till at length, taking refuge in this town of Ghent, under a false name, I have known a short period of tranquillity. Then came the thought of my child upon me: it grew like a thirst, till I could bear no more, and I sent for her. I knew not then that the late King was dead, or I might have waited to see the result; for often, when this Prince was but a child, I have had him on my knee; and I too taught him to handle the bow when he was seven years old; for, till his father stretched a hand towards the crown, he was my friend; and Harry of Hereford and John Grey were sworn brothers."

"The more the friendship once, the more the hate," replied Richard of Woodville; "so says an old song, noble knight; but now, that enmity is over, I trust, for ever. The Earl of March, the only well-founded obstacle in the way of Henry's rights, acknowledges them fully."

"And if he did not," answered Sir John Grey, with a stern brow, "I would never

draw my sword for him. The Earl of March—I mean the old Earl—by tame acquiescence in the deeds of Henry of Bolinbroke, set aside his title. He held out no hand to help his falling kinsman Richard; and if the crown was to be given away, it was the Peers and Commons of England had the right to give it; and they rightly gave it to the brave and wise, rather than to the feeble and the timid. It was Richard Plantagenet was my King, and not the Earl of March. To the one I swore allegiance, and owed much; to the other I had no duty, and owed nothing. I did not wrangle which son of a king should succeed, but I upheld the monarch who was upon the throne. Neither did I ever, my young friend, regard the Duke of Lancaster with private enmity, as you seem to think. He was ambitious; he usurped his cousin's throne; and I drew the sword against him because he did so; but I will acknowledge that, if there was one man in England fitted to fill that throne with dignity, he was the man. He, on the contrary, hated me, because his own

conduct had changed a friend into an enemy ; and so it is ever in this world.—But who is it rings the bell so fiercely? Hark ! perhaps it is my child !”—and, opening the door, he turned his head eagerly to listen to the sounds that rose from below.

Richard of Woodville also gave ear, for a word is sufficient to make hopes, however improbable, rise up like young plants in a spring shower — at least, in our early days. But the next moment, the steps of two persons sounded in the passage, and one of the servants, whom Woodville had seen in the antechamber of Sir Philip de Morgan, appeared, guided by the Flemish maid.

“My master greets you well, sir,” he said, addressing Sir John Grey, “and has sent you, by the King’s order, some of the money belonging to you, for your present need;” and thus saying, he laid a heavy bag of what appeared to be coin upon the table. “He bids me say,” continued the man, “that the rest of the money will arrive soon, and that you had better appear at the court of my Lord Count, as early as

may be, that all the world may know you have the King's protection."

Sir John Grey gazed at the bag of money with a mournful smile. "How ready men are," he said, "when fortune favours! How far and how long might I have sought this, when I was in distress!"—and, untying the bag, he took out a large piece of silver, saying to the servant, "There, my friend, is largess. Tell your master I will follow counsel.—He has heard of this, Richard;—you bore him letters, I suppose;" he added, as the man quitted the room, with thanks for his bounty.—"Well, 'tis no use to expect of men more than they judge their duty; yet this knight was the instrument who willingly urged the Duke of Burgundy to drive me forth from Dijon."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNT OF CHAROLOIS.

CLOTHED in the most splendid array with which he had been able to provide himself, his tight-fitting hose displaying to the highest advantage his graceful yet powerful limbs, with the coat of black silk, spotted with flowers of gold, cut wide, but gathered into numerous pleats or folds round the collar and the waist, and confined by a rich girdle to the form, while the sleeves, fashioned to the shape of the arm, and fastened at the wrist, showed the strong contour of the swelling muscles, Richard of Woodville stood before the door of the inn, as handsome and princely a man in his appearance, as ever graced a royal court. Over his shoulders he wore a short mantle of embroidered

cloth, trimmed with costly fur, the sleeves of which, according to the custom of the day, were slashed down the inner side so as to suffer the arm to be thrust out from them, while they, more for ornament than use, hung down to the bend of the knee. On his feet he wore the riding boots of the time, thrust down to the ankle; and—in accordance with a custom then new in the courts of France and Burgundy, but which ere long found its way to England—his heavy sword had been laid aside, and his only arm was a rich hilted dagger, suspended by a gold ring from the clasp of his girdle. His head was covered with a small bonnet, or velvet cap, ornamented by a single long white feather, showing that he had not yet reached knightly rank; and round it curled in large masses his glossy dark-brown hair.

Likewise arrayed with all the splendour that the young gentleman's purse had permitted him to procure, six of his servants stood ready by their horses' sides to accompany him to the dwelling of the Count of Charolois; and a glittering train they formed, well fitted to do honour to

old England in the eyes of a foreign court. It was evident enough that they were all well pleased with themselves; but their self-satisfaction was of the cool and haughty kind, so common to our countrymen, partaking more of pride than vanity. They looked down upon others more than they admired themselves; and, unlike the French or the Burgundians, seemed to care little what others thought of them,—quite contented with feeling that their garb became them, and that, should need be, they could give a stroke or bide a buffet with the best.

The horse of Richard of Woodville—not the one which had borne him from the coast, but a finer and more powerful animal—was brought round; and turning for a moment to Ella Brune, who stood with a number of other gazers at the door of the inn, the young Englishman said, “I will not be so careless and forgetful to-day, Ella; but will bring you back tidings of your kinsman, without farther fault.”

Then springing on his charger’s back he rode lightly away, while the poor girl gazed after him, with a deep sigh struggling at her heart, and

suppressed with pain, as she thought of the many eyes around her.

At the gate of the Graevensteen, orders had been already given to admit the young Englishman into the inner court; and, riding on, Richard of Woodville dismounted near the door which led to the apartments of Sir Philip de Morgan. A man who was waiting at the foot of the stairs, ran up them as soon as he saw the train, and before Woodville could follow, the envoy of the King of England came down, followed by a page. He greeted his young countryman with even marked courtesy, suffered his eye to rest with evident pleasure upon his goodly train, and then turning with a smile to Woodville, he enquired,—“Do men now in England gild the bits and chains of their horses?”

“It is a new custom, I believe,” replied the young gentleman. “I gave little heed to it, but told the people to give me those things that would not discredit my race and country at the court of Burgundy.”

“Well, let us go thither,” replied Sir Philip; “or, at least, to such part of it as is here in

Ghent. I have already advised the Count that you are coming, and he is willing to show you all favour."

The envoy accordingly led the way across the wide court, which separated the old gate with its gloomy towers, from the stern and still more forbidding fortress of the ancient Counts of Flanders; and passing first through a narrow chamber, in which were sitting some half dozen armed guards, and then through a wide hall, where a greater number of gentlemen were assembled in their garb of peace, the two Englishmen approached a flight of steps at the farther end. There a middle-aged man, with a gold chain round his neck, advanced, and addressing Sir Philip de Morgan, enquired if the Count was aware of their visit?

The diplomatist replied that they were expected at that hour; and the other, pushing open the door at the top of the steps, called loudly to an attendant within, to usher the visitors to his Lord's presence. After a few more ceremonies of the same kind, Woodville and his companion were introduced into the small ca-

binet in which the Count of Charolois was seated. He was not alone, for two personages having the appearance of men of some rank, but booted and spurred as if for a journey, were standing before him, in the act of taking their leave; and Richard of Woodville had an opportunity of examining briefly the countenance of the Prince, known afterwards as Philip the Good.

He was then in the brightness of early youth; and seldom has there been seen a face more indebted to expression for the beauty which all men agreed to admire. Taken separately, perhaps none of the features were actually fine, except the eyes; but there was a look of generous kindness, a softness brightened by a quick and intelligent glance, a benignity rather heightened than diminished by certain firmness of character, in the mouth and jaw, which was inexpressibly pleasing to the eye. There were lines of deep thought, too, about the brow, which contrasted strangely with the smooth soft skin of youth, and with the rounded cheeks without a furrow or hollow, and the eyelids as unwrinkled and full as those of careless infancy.

The Count had evidently been speaking on matters of grave moment, for there was a seriousness even in his smile, as, rising for an instant, while the others bowed and retired, he wished them a prosperous journey. He was above the middle height, but not very tall ; and, though in after years he became somewhat corpulent, he was now very slight in form, and graceful in his movements, which all displayed, even at the early age of seventeen, that dignity, never lost, even after the symmetry of youth was gone.

As the two gentlemen who took their leave were quitting the room, the Count turned to Sir Philip de Morgan, bowing rather stiffly, and noticing Woodville with a slight inclination of the head.

“This is, I suppose, the gentleman you mentioned, Sir Philip,” he said, “who has brought me letters from my royal cousin of England?”

“The same, fair sir,” replied the envoy. “Allow me to make known to you, Master Richard of Woodville, allied to the noble family of Beauchamp, one of the first in our poor island.”

“He is welcome to Ghent,” replied the

Count. But Woodville remarked that he did not demand the letters which he bore; and he was hesitating whether he should present the one addressed to him, when the Prince enquired in an easy tone, whether he had had a prosperous journey, following up the question with so many others of small importance, that the young Englishman judged there was something assumed in this eager but insignificant interrogatory.

He knew not, indeed, what was the motive; but his companion, too well accustomed to the ways of courts not to translate correctly a hint of the kind, whether he chose to apply it or not, took occasion, at the very first pause, to say, "Having now had the honour of introducing this young gentleman, I will leave him with you, my Lord Count, as I have important letters to write on the subject of our conversation this morning."

"Do so, sir knight," replied the Prince; and he took a step towards the door, as if to honour his departing visitor.

"Now, Master Richard of Woodville," he continued, as soon as the other was gone, "let

us speak of your journey hither; but first, if you please, let me see the letter which you bring, and which may, perhaps, render farther explanation unnecessary."

Richard of Woodville immediately presented the King's epistle to the Count of Charolois, who read the contents with attention, and then gazed at the bearer with an earnest glance.—"I have heard of you before, sir," he said, with a gracious smile, "and am most willing to retain you on the part of Burgundy. Such a letter as this from my royal cousin, could not be written in favour of one who did not merit high honour; and, unhappily, in these days, there are but too many occasions of gaining renown in arms. May I ask what payment you require for the services of yourself and your men?"

"None, noble Prince," replied Richard of Woodville: "I come but to seek honour. If my services be good, you or your father will recompense them as you think meet. In the mean time, all that I require is entertainment for myself and followers at the court of Burgundy, wherever it may be, and the discharge

of my actual expenses in time of war, or when I am employed in any enterprise you may think fit to entrust to me."

"I see, sir, that you are of the olden chivalry," said the Count, giving him his hand. "You are from this moment a retainer of our house; and I am glad," he continued, "that I have spoken with you alone; for good Sir Philip de Morgan loves none to bring letters from his King but himself. I may have cause to call upon you soon. Even now, indeed, ——; but of that hereafter. How many have you with you?"

"Ten stout archers," answered the young Englishman, "who will do their duty in whatever field they may be called to, and myself. That is my only force, but it may go far; for we are well horsed and armed, and most of us have seen blood drawn in our own land.— You said, my Lord Count, that even now an occasion might offer — at least, so I understood you. Now, I am somewhat impatient of fortune's tardiness, and would not miss her favours, as soon as her hand is open."

“The Count mused for a moment, and then looked up laughing. “Well,” he said; “perhaps my mother may call me a rash boy, in trusting to such new acquaintance; but yet I will confide in you to justify me. There may be an occasion very soon; and if there be, I will let you have your part. I, alas! must not go; but, at all events, have everything ready to set out at a moment’s notice; and you may chance to ride far before many days be over. Now let us speak of other things:” and he proceeded to ask his visitor numerous questions regarding the English court—its habits, customs, and the characters of the principal nobles that distinguished it.

Richard of Woodville answered his enquiries more frankly than he had done those of Sir Philip de Morgan, and the Count seemed well pleased with all he heard. Gradually their conversation lost the stiffness of first acquaintance; and the young Prince, throwing off the restraint of ceremony, gave way to the candid spirit of youth, spoke of his own father, and of his dangerous position at the court of France,

expressed his longing desire to take an active part in the busy deeds that were doing, touched with some bitterness upon the conduct of the Dauphin towards his sister, and added, with a flushed cheek, "Would my father suffer it, I would force him, lance to lance, if not to cast away his painted paramour, at least to do justice to his neglected wife. She is more fair and bright than any French harlot; and it must be a studied purpose to insult her race, that makes him treat her thus."

"Perhaps not, noble Count," replied Richard of Woodville: "there is nothing so capricious on this earth, as the pampered heart of greatness. Do we not daily see men of all ranks cast away from them things of real value to please the moment with some empty trifle? and the spoilt children of fortune—I mean Princes and Kings—may well be supposed to do the same. God, when he puts a crown upon their heads, leaves them to enrich it with jewels, if they will; but, alas! too often they content themselves with meaner things, and think the crown enough."

The Prince smiled with a thoughtful look, and gazed for a moment in Woodville's face, ere he replied. "You speak not the same language as Sir Philip de Morgan," he said at length: "his talk is ever of insult and injury to the house of Burgundy. He can find no excuse for the house of Valois."

"He speaks as a politician, my Lord Count," replied Woodville: "would that I might say, I speak as a friend, though a bold one. I know not what are his views and purposes; but when you mention ought to me, I must answer frankly, if I answer at all; and in this case I can easily believe that the Dauphin, in the wild heat of youth, perhaps nurtured in vice and licentiousness, and, at all events, taught early to think that his will must have no control, may neglect a sweet lady for a trumpery leman, without meaning any insult to your noble race. Bad as such conduct is, it were needless to aggravate it by imaginary wrongs."

The Count looked down in thought, and then, raising his head with a warm smile, he answered, "You speak nobly, sir, and you may

say you are my friend; for the man who would temper a Prince's passion, without any private motive, is well worthy of the character here written;" and he laid his hand upon Henry's letter, which he had placed on the table.

"I trust, my Lord Count," replied Woodville, "that you will never have cause to say, in any case where my allegiance to my own Sovereign is not concerned, that I do not espouse your real interests, as warmly as I would oppose any passion, even of your own, which I thought contrary to them. I am not a courtier, fair Sir, and may express myself somewhat rudely; but I will trust to your own discernment to judge, in all instances, of the motive rather than the manner."

"I shall remember more of what you have said than you perhaps imagine," answered the young Count. "You gave me a lesson, my noble friend—and henceforth I will call you by that name—in regard to those spoilt children of fortune, as you term them, Princes; and I will try not to let a high station pamper me into deeds like those which I myself condemn. But

there are many persons here, in the good town of Ghent, to whom I must make you known, as they will be your companions for the future; and, before night, such arrangements shall be made for your lodging and accommodation as will permit of your taking up your abode in the old castle here.—There is but one warning I will give you,” he continued: “Sir Philip de Morgan is a shrewd and clever man—very zealous in the cause of his King, but somewhat jealous of all other influence. My father esteems him highly, though he is not always ready to follow whither he would lead. You had better be his friend than his enemy; and yet, when there is anything to be done, communicate with medirect, and not through him.”

“I will follow your advice, sir, as far as may be,” replied Woodville; “but I do not think there is any great chance of Sir Philip de Morgan and myself interfering with each other. I am a soldier; he is a statesman. I will not meddle with his trade, and I think he is not likely to envy me mine. He was a good man at arms, I hear, in his early days; but

I fancy he will not easily enclose himself in plate again."

"Good faith," exclaimed the young Count laughing, "his cuirass would need be shaped like a bow, and have as much iron about it as the great bombard of Oudenarde, which our good folks of Ghent call Mad Meg.* No, no! I do not think that he will ever couch a lance again. But come, my friend, let us to the hall, where we shall find some of the nobles of Burgundy and Flanders waiting for us. Then we will ride to my mother's, where I will make you known to her fair ladies. I have no farther business for the day; but yet I must not be absent from my post, as every hour I expect tidings which may require a sudden resolution."

The Prince then led the way into the large hall, through which Richard of Woodville had passed about half an hour before; and there, was instantly surrounded by a number of

* Dulle Grite.—This great cannon, or bombard, was forged for the siege of Oudenarde, in 1382, and is nearly twenty feet long, and about eleven in circumference.

gentlemen, to whom he introduced his new retainer. Many a noble name, which the young Englishman had often heard of, was mentioned:—Croys, Van Heydes, St. Pauls and Royes, Lalains, and Lignes; and from all, as might be expected, under the circumstances in which he was introduced to them, he received a courteous reception. It must not be denied, however, that although chivalrous customs required a friendly welcome to every adventurous gentleman seeking service at a foreign court, human nature, the same in all ages, left room for jealousy of any one who might aspire to share the favour which each desired to monopolize. Thus, though every one was, as I have said, courteous in demeanour to Richard of Woodville, it was all cold and formal; and many a whispered observation on his appearance and manners, on the accent in which he spoke the language, and on the slight difference of his dress from that of the Burgundian court, marked a willingness to find fault wherever it was possible. For his part, he took little notice of these things, well knowing what he had to

expect, and aware that friendship could not be gained at once, he treated all with perfect good humour and civility, in the hope that those who were worthy of any farther consideration would learn in time to esteem him, and to cast away any needless jealousy.

After passing about half an hour in the hall, the young Count selected some five or six of the gentlemen present to accompany him on his visit to his mother, who was lodged in the new palace, called the Cour des Princes; and, as soon as his horses were brought round, he descended, with the young Englishman and the rest, into the court of the castle. He paused for a moment, where, ranged in a line by their horses' sides, he saw the stout yeomen who had accompanied Richard of Woodville thither; and, as with an eye not unskilful even then in judging of thewes and sinews, he marked their light, yet powerful limbs, with an approving smile, he turned to his new friend, saying, in a low voice, "Serviceable stuff there, in the day of need, I doubt not."

"I have every hope they will prove so, my

good Lord," replied Woodville ; and, giving them a sign, each man sprang at once into the saddle, except the one who led forward his young master's horse, and held the stirrup while he mounted.

As the gay party rode along through the streets of Ghent, the inconstant people, so often in open rebellion against their sovereigns, shouted loud acclamations on the path of the young and graceful Prince, who, in return, bowed low his head, or nodded familiarly to those he knew in the crowd. The distance was but short ; but the Count took the opportunity of passing through some of the principal streets of the town, to show the splendour of the greatest manufacturing city at that time in the world, to the young Englishman ; and frequently he turned and asked his opinion of this or that as they passed, or pointed out to him the magnificent shops and vast fabrics which lined their road on either side.

There was certainly much to admire ; and Richard of Woodville, not insensible of the high importance of the arts, praised, with perhaps a

better judgment than most of the haughty nobility of the day would have displayed, the indications of that high commercial prosperity which the courtiers affected to hold in contempt. He would not miss the opportunity, however, of learning something of the kinsman of Ella Brune ; and, after answering one of the observations of the Prince, he added—"But as I came from my hostel this morning, sir, I perceived that you have other arts carried to a notable height in the good city of Ghent, besides that of the weavers. I passed by many a fair stall of goldsmiths' work, which seemed to me to display several pieces of fine and curious workmanship."

"Oh ! that we have, amongst the best in the world," replied the Count ; "though to say sooth, when we gave you a number of our weavers, to teach you Englishmen that art, we borrowed from you in return much of our skill in working the precious metals. Many of our best goldsmiths, even now, are either Englishmen, or the descendants of those who first came over. I had one right dexterous arti-

ficer, who used to dwell with my household, and who is still my servant; but my mother's confessor suspected him of a leaning towards heresy, and exacted that he should be sent forth out of the castle. 'Twas but for a jest at our good father the Pope; but poor Brune made it worse by saying, when questioned, that as there are three Popes, all living, the confessor might place it on the shoulders of him he liked. Many a grave man, I have remarked, will bear anything rather than a jest; and father Claude, from that moment, would not be satisfied till Nicholas Brune was gone."

"Poor fellow! And what became of him?" asked Richard of Woodville; "I have known some of his family in England."

"Oh! he is in a shop at the corner of the market, close to the castle gate," replied the Prince, "and drives a thriving trade; so that he has gained by the exchange—I hope, both in pocket, and in prudence. I have not heard any charge against him lately; and I do believe it was but a silly jest, which none but an Englishman would have ventured."

Richard of Woodville smiled, but made no reply; and in a few minutes after, they reached the gates of the palace, from which he followed the Count of Charolois straight to the presence of Margaret of Bavaria, Duchess of Burgundy, whom they found in an inner chamber, surrounded by a small party of young dames and elderly knights, devising, as the term was in those days, upon some motto which had been laid before them.

Amongst faint traces of what had once been great beauty, the countenance of the Princess displayed deep lines of thought and anxiety. She smiled kindly upon the young stranger, and seemed to him to examine his face with more attention than was ordinary, or, perhaps, altogether pleasant. She made no remark, however, but spoke of the court of England with better information than her son had displayed, and, somewhat to the surprise of the young Englishman, evinced some knowledge of his own family and history; for, although the court of Burgundy at this time held the place which that of the count of

Foix had formerly filled, and was the centre of all the news, and, we may say, of all the gossip in Europe—though its heralds and its minstrels made it their business day and night to collect all the tales, anecdotes, and rumours of every eminent person throughout the chivalrous world, Richard of Woodville was not aware of ever having done anything to merit such sort of notice.

The conversation was soon turned to other subjects, and the Duchess was in the act of giving her son an account, in a jesting tone, of some visits which she had made that morning to several of the religious institutions of the town, when a page entered hastily, bearing a packet in his hand. Approaching direct to the Count of Charolois, he presented it on his knee, saying, "From my lord the Duke. The messenger sought you at the castle, sir, in haste, and then came hither."

The Prince took it with an eager and anxious look, tore off the silk and seal, without stopping to cut the cord that bound it, and then read the contents, with a countenance

which expressed rather preconceived apprehension, perhaps, than emotion caused by the intelligence which the despatch contained. The Duchess of Burgundy remained seated, but gazed upon her son's face with a look more sad than alarmed; and it seemed to Richard of Woodville that, internally, she was meditating on the future course of that fair and noble youth, amidst all the many perils, cares, and griefs, which surrounded in those days the paths of princes, rather than even on the present dangers which might affect her husband.

There is a tender timidity in the love of woman for her offspring, which is generated by none of the other relations of life. The husband, or the brother, or the father, is her stay and support—he is there to protect and to defend; and though she may tremble at his danger, or weep for his misfortune, there may be, and often is, some shade of selfish feeling in the dread and in the sorrow. Such is not the case with the child: it is for him she fears, not for herself,—for him entirely, with emotions unmixed, with devotion unalloyed.

To save any other dear one she might readily sacrifice life—from duty, from enthusiasm, from love. But it would still be a sacrifice, in any other case than that of her child: to save him, it would be an impulse.

The Duchess gazed upon the young Count's face then with calm but sad consideration; and perhaps her own memories supplied somewhat too abundantly the materials for fancy to raise up, without aid, a sad model of the future. She knew that honour, or goodness, or even courage, cannot bring security; that innocence cannot escape malice; that virtue cannot ensure peace; that wealth, and power, and a high name, are but as butts whereon to hang the targets at which the arrows of the world are aimed; and she feared for her son, seeing, with prophetic eye, the life of turmoil and contention and peril that lay before him.

As soon as he had read the letter, the Count suffered his hand to drop by his side, and gazed upward for a moment or two in thought;—then, turning gracefully to his mother, he took her hand with a smile, from which was ba-

nished every trace or indication of the thoughts that he did not choose to communicate to those around, and saying, "Dear lady mother, we must take counsel," he led her away through a door which those who were acquainted with the palace knew must conduct them to the private cabinet of the Duchess.

The party which remained behind was soon separated into different groups, some of the young nobles who had accompanied the Count taking advantage of the absence of the persons to whom they owed most reverence, for the purpose of saying sweet, whispered things to the fair dames of the court; some gathering together to enquire of each other, and conjecture amongst themselves, what might be the nature of the tidings received; and two or three others, of either kinder or more pliant dispositions than the rest, seizing the opportunity of cultivating the friendship of the young Englishman. No great time was spent on these occupations, however; for before the Duchess and her son had been gone more than five minutes the Count returned, and, looking round the circle,

said, "Bad tidings scatter good company, my lords. I must ride this very night towards Lille. We will not strip our mother's court here of all her gallant knights and gentlemen, especially in this wise but somewhat turbulent city of Ghent. You, therefore, my lords of Croy, Joigny, St. George, Thyan, and Vergier, with what men are most ready of your trains, I beseech you to give me your fair company ere four of the clock; and you, Master Richard of Woodville, my good friend, if you be so minded, hasten your preparation and join me at the castle by that hour.—You may have occasion," he continued in a low tone, taking the young Englishman by the arm, to win the golden spurs, of which we have heard you were disappointed, by no fault of your own, at the battle of Bramham Moor. We shall be back in Ghent before the week be out—so you can leave your baggage here, if you so please. Away then, noble lords!—away!—for we have a long march before us, and, perhaps, a busy day to-morrow."

All was in a moment the bustle and con-

fusion of departure. The young Count turned and went back to the cabinet of his mother, as soon as he had spoken; the ladies of the Duchess rose; and, though some of them paused for an instant, to speak a word in private to those who were about to leave them, retired one by one. The old knights, and those who were to remain in Ghent, walked out to see their friends and comrades mount; and in less than five minutes the hall was cleared, and the court-yard nearly vacant.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEPARTURE.

“WE must to horse without delay, Ned,” said Richard of Woodville, as he entered the inn.

“Why, you have been to horse already, master of mine,” replied Ned Dyram in a somewhat sullen tone.

“And must mount again, ere two hours be over,” rejoined Woodville; “but where and how can I leave the baggage?”

“Ay, who can tell that?” said the other. “See what it is to march loaded like a carrier’s pack-horse, with more things than you can carry!—You are coming back soon, then, to Ghent?”

“Ere the week be out,” answered his lord; “so the Count tells me.”

“Pray, sir, never mind what counts tell you,” exclaimed Ned Dyrham. “Mind what your own senses tell you. If you know where you are going, you can judge as well as a king when you may be back.”

“But that I do not know,” replied Woodville, somewhat impatiently. “No more words, Master Dyrham; but gather everything together into one chamber, and I will speak to the host as to its security.”

“Little security for a traveller’s baggage in a foreign hotel,” rejoined Ned Dyrham, “unless some one stays to take charge of it.”

“Then, by my honour, you shall be the man to do so,” cried his master, thinking by leaving him behind when activity and enterprise were before him, to punish him sufficiently for his saucy tone.

But Ned Dyrham seemed not at all disappointed, and replied with an indifferent air, “I am very willing to stay. I am one who does not love journeys I know not whither, and expeditions I know not for what.”

“Well, then, you remain,” answered his mas-

ter. "Gather the things together, as I have said, and you shall be left like a trader's drudge, to look after the goods.—Where is Ella Brune?"

"In her own chamber, I fancy," replied Ned Dyram. "She has shut herself up there, ever since you were gone, like a nun."

"Call her down hither to the eating-room," was his lord's reply; and Ned Dyram hastened away.

The fair girl did not make her young protector wait long; and ere he had finished his directions to his train, to prepare all things for immediate departure, she was by his side. Taking her hand kindly, he led her into the common hall of the inn, and told her what he had discovered regarding her kinsman, adding, that as he was about to set out in a few hours with the young Count de Charolois, he would at once accompany her to the house of Nicholas Brune, in order to ascertain if she could have shelter and protection there.

"I know not, my poor Ella," he said, "whether that dwelling may be one where you can

safely and happily stop long; for this good man has been somewhat rash in his words, and is under suspicion of leaning to those heretical notions that are so rife; but I shall be back in a week or less; and then you can tell me all that you think of the matter. You would not wish, I know, to remain with people who would seek to pervert you from the true Catholic faith."

"And you are sure to return in a week?" asked the poor girl, her cheek, which had turned somewhat pale before, resuming its warm hue.

"So the Count assures me," answered Woodville, "and I doubt it not, Ella; but, at all events, I will care for you, be assured, poor thing."

"You tell me to put all the baggage in one room," said Ned Dyrham, thrusting in his head; "and the men tell me that they are to have each his harness, and you yours. Two contrary orders, master of mine! Which is to be obeyed?"

"Your wit is strangely halting just now,

Ned," answered his master. "Put all, but what I have ordered to be taken, into the room, and see that it be arranged rightly, and quickly too.—Now, Ella, cast something over your head, and come with me to your kinsman's shop.—What wait you for, sir?"

"To know which suit you are pleased to have," replied Ned Dyrham; while Ella passed him to seek the wimple which she had cast off in the house.

"I have given orders on that score to others," answered his master; and as the man retired, he murmured to himself, "I shall have to send that fellow back to the King. He does not please me."

With a rapid step Richard of Woodville led the way, as soon as Ella had joined him, to the wide open space which then, as since, was used as a market, before the old castle of the Counts of Flanders; and, as none of the shops or stalls bore their masters' names inscribed, he entered the first they came to, and enquired which was the house of Nicholas Brune.

"His house," replied the man to whom he

had addressed himself in French, "is at the other end of the town; but his shop is yonder," and he pointed with his hand from the door to one of the projecting cases, covered with a network of iron wire, under which the goldsmiths of Ghent at that period exposed some of their larger goods for sale. "The last stall but one," added the trader; and Woodville and his fair companion sped on towards the spot.

At the unglazed window, behind this booth, stood a man of middle age, grey headed, but with a fresh and cheerful countenance, who, as soon as he saw the two approach, demanded, in the common terms of the day, what they sought in his trade. The next instant, however, his eye rested upon Ella's face, which wore a faint smile, and he exclaimed in his native tongue,—
"Mesaunter! if there be not my cousin Ella! How art thou, lass? Welcome to Ghent! What news of the good old man? My dame will be right glad to see you both again."

"She will never see him more," replied Ella Brune, in a sad tone; "but of that I will tell you hereafter, kinsman; for I must not stay this

noble gentleman, who has befriended me on the way.—What I seek to know is, if you can give me shelter at your dwelling for a week, till I can look around me? I will pay for my abiding, Nicholas,” she added, perhaps knowing that her cousin, dealing in gold, had somewhat too great a fondness for the pure metal.

But Nicholas Brune was in a generous mood; and he replied, “Shelter shalt thou have, fair Ella, and meat and drink, with right good will, for a week and a day, without cost or payment. If thou stayest with us longer, which God send, we will talk about purveyance. In the meantime I will thank this gentleman for his goodness to you.—Why, by my tongs, I think I saw him riding this morning with my noble lord, the Count.”

“You did, most likely,” replied Richard of Woodville, “for we passed by your door: but I have farther to ride to-night, Master Nicholas; and now, having seen this fair maiden safe under your protection, I will leave her there. But you had better send up some of your lads with speed to my hostel for the coffer

that we brought, as, perchance, Ned Dyram would not let you have it, Ella, when I am gone."

Ella Brune smiled, with an effort to keep up the light cheerfulness which she had lately assumed, and replied, "I think, noble sir, that Master Dyram is not a carl to refuse me ought I ask him; but yet if my kinsman can spare a boy, he had better go at once."

"I will soon find one," answered the stout goldsmith; and, turning to a furnace-room, which lay behind his shop, he called one of his men forth, and bade him follow the gentleman back.

The parting then came between Ella Brune and Richard of Woodville; and bitter was the moment to the poor minstrel girl. She had learned a world of new sensations since she first saw him;—that clinging attachment, which made her long never to be absent from his side for a whole day; that tender regard which made her dread to see him depart, lest evil should befall him by the way; that love which is full of fears for the beloved that we never feel for

ourselves. But no one could have told that there were any emotions in her bosom but respect and gratitude, unless the transitory look of deep grief that crossed her face, as she bent down her head to kiss the hand he gave her, could have been seen. It was gone as soon as she raised her eyes again ; and her countenance was bright and cheerful, when he said —

“ Again my will although I wende,
I may not alway dwellen here,
For every thing shall have an ende,
And frendès are not ay ifere : ”

and, skilled in all the lore of old ballads, almost as much as himself, she answered at once, from that beautiful song of the days of the Black Prince—

“ For frendship and for giftès goode,
For mete and drink so grete plentie,
That lord, that raught was on the roode,
He kepe the comeli companie.
“ On sea or lande where that ye be,
He governe you withouten greve ;
So good disport ye han made me,
Again my will, I take my leve.”

And, after again kissing his hand, she let

him depart, keeping down by a great effort the tears that struggled to rise up into her eyes. But she would not for the world have suffered one weak emotion to appear before her kinsman, whose character she knew right well, and over whom she proposed at once to assume an influence, which could only be gained by the display of a firm and superior mind.

“And who may that young lord be, pretty Ella?” asked Nicholas Brune: “he seems to take great heed of you, dear kinswoman, and is evidently too high a bird to mate with one of our feather.”

“Mate with me!” answered Ella, in a scornful tone. “Oh, no! cousin mine. He will mate, ere long, with one of the sweetest ladies within the shores of merry England, who has been most kind to me, too. He is a friend of the King; and when poor old Murdock Brune, my grandsire, and your uncle, was killed, by a fiend of a courtier trampling him under his horse’s feet, that gentleman, who saw the deed, threw the monster back from his horse, and afterwards represented my case to the King, who

punished the man-slayer, and sent me fifty half-nobles."

Nicholas Brune was affected in two very opposite ways by Ella's words. "My uncle killed by a courtier!" he exclaimed at first, with his eyes flashing fire. "What was his name, maiden—what was his name?"

"Sir Simeon of Roydon," answered Ella Brune; and seeking a scrap of parchment and a reed pen, the goldsmith wrote down the name, as if to prevent it from escaping his memory. But the moment after, his mind reverted to another part of Ella's speech. "Fifty half-nobles!" he exclaimed, taking a piece of gold out of a drawer, and looking at it. "That was a princely gift, indeed, Ella; and you owe the young gentleman much gratitude for getting it for you."

"I owe him and his fair lady-love more than I can ever repay, for many an act beside," answered Ella Brune; "but I am resolved, my good kinsman, that I will discharge part of the debt of gratitude, if not the whole.—I have a plan in my head, cousin—I have a plan,

which I know not whether I will tell you, or not."

"Take counsel!—always take counsel!" answered the Goldsmith.

"I want none, fair kinsman," replied Ella; "I need neither counsel nor help. My own wit shall be my counsellor; and as I am rich now, I can always get aid when I want it."

"Rich!" said Nicholas:—"what, with fifty half-nobles, pretty maid? It is a heavy sum, truly, but soon spent."

"Were that all," rejoined Ella, "I should not count myself very rich; but I have more than that, cousin—enough to dower me to as gay a citizen as any in Ghent. But here seem a number of gallants gathering round the gate of the Graevensteen: I will back into the far part of the shop, and we will talk more hereafter."

While this conversation had been going on between Nicholas and Ella Brune, Richard of Woodville, followed by the Goldsmith's man, had hurried back to the inn, and directed Ned Dyrham to deliver over the coffer belonging to

the minstrel girl, which had been brought, not without some inconvenience, on the back of one of the mules that carried his own baggage. The young gentleman did not remark that, in executing this order, Ned Dyram questioned the lad cunningly; and busy, to say sooth, in paying his score to the host, and making his final preparations for departure, he forgot for the time his fair companion of the way, quite satisfied that she was safe and comfortable under the roof of her kinsman.

Some time before the hour appointed, Woodville was in the court of the old castle, with his men armed and mounted, in very different guise from their peaceful habiliments of the morning. He contented himself with sending in a page to inform the Count that he was ready, and remained standing by his horse's side; while several of those who had been chosen by the young Burgundian Prince as his companions, entered through the old gate, and paused to admire, with open eyes, the splendid array of the English band, each man armed in plate of the newest and most

approved form, according to his degree, and each bearing, slung over his shoulder, the green quiver, filled with the fatal English arrows, which turned so often the tide of battle in the olden time.

After having waited for about ten minutes, the page whom Woodville had sent, came back, and conducted him into the castle, where, in a suite of rooms occupying the basement story of one of the towers, he found the young Count, armed and ready to mount. "Here is your lodging after our return," said the Prince rapidly. "I wished to show it to you ere we set out: these four chambers, and one above. Your horses must be quartered out.—And now, *my friend*, let us to the saddle: the rest have come, I think." And, speeding through the passages to the court-yard, he welcomed gracefully the gentlemen assembled, sprang upon his horse's back, and, followed by his train, rode out over the private bridge belonging to the castle, bending his steps upon the road to the French frontier.

The Count himself, and the small body that

accompanied him, amounting in all to about a hundred men, were all armed after the heavy and cumbersome fashion of those days; and each of the several parties of which the troop was composed, had with them one or two led horses, or mules, loaded with spare arms and clothing. Considering weight and encumbrances, they moved forward at a very rapid rate—certainly not less than seven miles an hour; and pausing nowhere but to give water to the horses, they had advanced nearly eight leagues on their way ere nightfall. A few minutes after, through the faint twilight which remained in the sky, Richard of Woodville perceived some spires and towers rising at a short distance over the flat country before them; and, on his asking one of the gentlemen, with whom he had held a good deal of conversation during their journey, what town it was that they were approaching, the reply was, “Courtray.”

Here the Count of Charolois stopped for about an hour; but, while the horses and most of his attendants contrived to obtain some very tolerable food, the young Prince neither ate nor

drank; but, with a mind evidently anxious and disturbed, walked up and down the hall, occasionally talking to Richard of Woodville, the only one who exercised the same abstinence, but never mentioning either the end or object of their journey.

A little after eight o'clock, the whole party were in the saddle once more, and, judging from the direction which they took as they issued forth from the gates of Courtray, the gentleman who had been the young Englishman's principal companion on the road informed him that they must be going to Lille. In about two hours and a half more, that city was seen by the light of the moon; and, after causing the gates to be opened, the Count took his way through the streets, but did not direct his course to the château usually inhabited by the Flemish Counts. Alighting at the principal hostelry of the place, he turned to the gentlemen who followed, saying, "Here we must wait for the first news that to-morrow may bring. Make yourselves at ease, noble lords.—I am tired, and will to bed."

Without farther explanation, he retired at once with his personal attendants; and his followers proceeded to amuse themselves as best they might. Richard of Woodville remained with his comrades of the road for about an hour, and during that time much of the rough asperity of fresh acquaintance was brushed away. He then followed the example of the young Count, in order to rise refreshed the next morning.

CHAPTER X.

THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND.

THE morning after the departure of Richard of Woodville dawned clear and bright upon the city of Ghent; and the hour of seven found a small party assembled in a neat wooden house, not many yards within the Brabant Gate, at the cheerful meal of breakfast. With dagger in hand and hearty good will, Nicholas Brune was hewing away at a huge capon, which, with a pickled boar's head, formed the staple of the meal, helping his good buxom dame and Ella Brune to what he considered choice pieces, and praising the fare with more exuberance than modesty, considering that he was the lord of the feast.

Madame Brune, as we should call her in

the present day, but known in Ghent by a more homely appellation, which may be translated "Wife Brune," was a native of the good city; and, by his marriage with her, Nicholas had not only obtained a considerable sum of money, but also various advantages, which placed him nearly, if not altogether, on a footing with the born citizens;—so that, for his fair better half, he had great respect and devotion, as in duty bound. For Ella his reverence had been greatly increased, by finding that she was endowed with a quality very engaging in his opinion—namely, wealth; for the sum which she possessed, though but a trifle in our eyes, was in those days no inconsiderable fortune, as I have already taken the liberty of hinting.

I must not, however, do the worthy goldsmith injustice, and suffer the reader to believe that, had Ella appeared poor and friendless, as he had last seen her, Nicholas Brune would have shown her ought but kindness; for he was a good-hearted and right-minded man; but it is not attributing too much to the in-

fluence of the precious metals in which he worked, to admit that, certainly, he always took them into account in computing the degree of respect which he was bound to pay to others. He would not have done any dishonest or evil act to obtain a whole Peruvian mine, if such a thing had been within the sphere of his imagination; but still, the possession of such a mine would have greatly enhanced, in the eyes of Nicholas Brune, the qualities of any one who might chance to be its proprietor. The only thing, indeed, which puzzled him in the present instance was, how his old uncle could assume the garb of a wandering, and not generally respected race, when he had by him a sum which set him above all chance of want. At first he fancied that the old man's love of music—which was to him, who did not know one note from another, a separate marvel—might have been the motive: the ruling passion strong in death. But then he thought that good old Murdoch might have made sweet melody just as well in his own house, as in wandering from court to court,

and fair to fair; but immediately after, remembering the old man's peculiar religious notions, with which he was well acquainted, he concluded that zeal, in which he could fully sympathize, must have been the cause of conduct that seemed so strange. This was an inducement he could understand; for, though on no other points was he of an enthusiastic and vehement character, yet he was so in matters of faith; and if he could have made up his mind to any sort of death, it would have been that of a martyr; but, to say truth, he could not bring himself to prefer any way of leaving the world, and thought one as disagreeable as another. Thus he arrived at the conclusion, that his uncle was quite right in using any means to conceal both his wealth and his religion.

However, as I have said, he viewed Ella with a very placable countenance,—invited her to eat and drink; and, as his mind reverted to what she had said, in regard to paying for her food and lodging, he treated it with a mixture of jest and argument, which showed her that he would receive something, though not too much.

“Why, my fair cousin,” he said, when she recurred to the subject, “in this good town of Ghent, all is at so base a price that men live for nothing, and are expected to sell their goods for nothing, I can tell you. Now, look at that capon; a fatter one never carried its long legs about a stack of corn, and yet it cost but six liards. You would pay a sterling, or may be two, for such a one in London; and here you might get a priest as fat to sing a mass for the same money.—God help the mummers !”

Ella, however, replied, that she would settle her share with his dame, for so long as she stayed, and was proceeding to let her good-humoured cousin into some of her views and intentions, foreseeing that she might need his countenance and assistance, when the outer door opened, and, after a knock at that of the room in which they sat, Ned Dyrham entered, to enquire after his fair companion of the way. Ella knew not whether to be pleased or sorry to see him; but surprised she certainly was; for she had thought he was far away from

Ghent with his lord. The cause of these contrary emotions was simply, that she felt little pleasure in the man's society, and less in the love that he professed towards her, and yet having made up her mind to take advantage of the passion he experienced or affected to work out her own purposes, she saw that his remaining in Ghent might greatly facilitate her views. But the game she had to play was a delicate one, for she had resolved, for no object whatsoever, to give encouragement to his suit; but rather, to leave him to divine her wishes and promote them if he would, than ask ought at his hands.

Though carried on by that eager and enthusiastic spirit which lingers longer in the breast of woman than in that of man: from which, indeed, everything in life tends to expel it—his own wearing passions, his habits of indulgence, the hard lessons of experience, and the checks of repeated disappointment — yet she felt somewhat alarmed at the new course before her. Perhaps she was not quite sure, though the end ever in view was high and noble, self-devoted,

and generous, that the means were right. To have followed Richard of Woodville through the world—to have watched over him as a guardian spirit—to have sacrificed for his sake, and for his happiness, all, anything, peace, security, comfort, and even her own fame—I do not say her own honour—she would not have scrupled; but she might ask herself at that moment, whether it was right and just, to sport with the love of another—to use it for her purpose—even to suffer it, when she knew that it could never be returned. And yet woman's eye is very keen; and that selfishness, which frequently bears such a large share in man's love, was so apparent to her view in all Dyrham's actions, that she could not but feel less compunction for suffering him to pamper himself with hopes, than if he had been of a nobler and a higher nature.

Whatever were the ideas that crossed her mind, and kept her silent for a moment, they rapidly passed away; and when her cousin, after gazing at the intruder for an instant, asked who he was and what he wanted, she

answered for him, in a gay tone, affecting the coquettish airs then very common in a higher class, "Oh! he is a servant of mine, Nicholas—vowed to the tip of my finger. I do not intend ever to have him; but if the poor creature is resolved to sigh at my feet, I must e'en let him. Pray you, give him welcome. What news, servant? How is it that you have not followed your lord?"

"Because," replied Ned Dyam, "I loved best to stay with my lady."

"Nay," answered Ella Brune, "call me not *your* lady. You are my servant, but I am yours not at all, either as lady or servant. You have not yet merited such grace."

In this light and jesting tone she continued to treat him; and though perhaps such conduct might have repelled a more sensitive and delicate lover, with Ned Dyam it but added fuel to the fire. Each day he came to visit—each day returned with stronger passion in his heart. Jest, indeed, which was far from natural to her character or to her feelings at the time, Ella could not always keep up: though great and

stern resolution is often the source of a certain bitter mirth at minor things. But in every graver moment, she spoke to Dyrham of Richard of Woodville and of Mary Markham—for as yet she knew her by no other name. She did so studiously, and yet so calmly and easily, that not the slightest suspicion of the real feelings in her heart ever crossed the mind of her hearer. Of Mary, she told him far more than he had hitherto gathered from his companions in Woodville's train, and dwelt long upon her beauty, her gentleness, her kindness. Following closely her object, she even found means to hint, one day, a regret that she had not been permitted to follow the young Englishman on his expedition.

“What would I have given,” she said “to have had your chance of going with him; and yet you chose to remain behind!”

“Indeed, fair Ella!” he exclaimed; “what made you so anxious to go?”

“Nay,” answered the girl with a mysterious look, “do you expect me to tell you my secrets, bold man? I would give a chain of gold, how-

ever, to be able to follow your master about the world for just twelve months, if it could be done without risking my own fair fame. Oh ! for one of those fairy girdles that made the wearer invisible !”

“Methinks you love him, Mistress Ella,” replied Ned Dyram, more from pique than suspicion.

But Ella answered, boldly and at once, though he had touched the wound somewhat roughly.

“Yes, I do love him well !” she answered ; “and I have cause, servant of mine. But it is not for that. I have a vow ; I have a purpose ; and though they must be executed, I know not well how to do so.—I ought not to have left him, even now.”

“I dare say he would have taken you, if you had asked him !” replied the man.

“And what would men have said ?” demanded Ella. “What would you have thought yourself—what might your young lord have thought—though he is not so foolish as yourself? Most likely you would all have done me wrong in your fancies. No, no!—if I go, it must be

secretly.—But there, get you gone; I will tell you no more.”

“Nay, tell on, sweet Ella!” exclaimed Ned Dyram; “and perhaps I may aid you.”

“Get you gone, I say!” replied Ella Brune. “I will tell you no more, at least for the present. You help me!—Why, were I to trust to you for help, in such a matter as this, should I not put myself entirely in your power?”

“But I would never misuse it, Ella,” answered Ned Dyram.

“No, no!” she exclaimed; “I will never put myself in any man’s power, unless I suffer him to put a ring upon my finger; and then, of course, I am as much his slave as if he had a ring round my neck.—There, leave me! leave me! You may come again to-morrow, and see if I am in a better mood.—I feel cross to-day.”

Ned Dyram retired; but he was destined to return before the day was over, and to bring her tidings, which, however unpleasant in themselves, rendered his coming welcome. As he took his way back towards the inn, just at the

corner of the Vendredi market-place, he met a party of travellers, and heard the English tongue; but he took little heed, for his thoughts were full of Ella Brune; and he had passed half across the square, when one of the horsemen rode after him, and said his lord desired to speak with him. Ned Dyam looked up, and at once remembered the man's face. For reasons of his own, however, he suffered not the slightest trace of recognition to appear on his own countenance. As the horseman spoke in English, he replied in the same tongue, asking who was his master, and what he wanted.

"He is an English knight," replied the servant, "and what he wants he will tell you himself."

"But I am not fond of trusting myself in English knights' hands," answered Ned Dyam "they sometimes use one badly: so tell me his name, or I do not go."

"His name is Sir Simeon of Roydon," replied the man: "a very good name, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes! I will go to him," replied Ned

Dyam. "He used to be about the court, when I was a greater man than I am now;" and he walked straight up to the spot where Sir Simeon of Roydon had halted his horse and lowly doffed his bonnet as he approached.

"My knave tells me," said the knight, "that you are a servant of the King's.—Is it so?"

"It was so once, sir," replied Ned Dyam; and then added, looking round to the servant who had followed him, "So, it was he who told you: I do not remember him!"

"Perhaps not," answered the knight; "but you came up with him once, when he was following a young woman in whom I take some interest. Do you know where she is now?"

"It may be so," replied Ned Dyam; "but I talk not of such things in the street, good sir."

Simeon of Roydon paused and mused, gazing in the man's face the while. "Whom do you serve now?" he demanded, at length.

"Why, I am employed by no one at present," said Ned Dyam; not exactly telling a falsehood, but implying one.

"Well, then come to me to-night, some time

after sunset," rejoined Sir Simeon, "and we will speak more. You know the convent of the Dominicans; I am to lodge there, for the prior is my cousin. Ask for Sir Simeon of Roydon, or the English knight, and the porter will show you my lodging."

"At the Dominicans!" cried Ned Dyram: "why, you are not going thither now—at least, that is not the way."

"It is not?" exclaimed the knight. "Why this fellow agreed to guide me;" and he pointed to a man in the dress of a peasant, who accompanied them.

"Then he is guiding you wrong," replied Ned Dyram. "Go straight up that street, follow the course of the river to the left, and, when you have passed the second bridge, turn up to the right, cross the Lys, and you will see the Dominicans right before you. He was taking you to the Carmelites."

"Well, don't fail to come," rejoined Sir Simeon of Roydon; and he then rode on, pouring no very measured abuse upon the head of his guide.

The moment he was gone, Dyram hurried back to Ella Brune; and a long and eager conversation ensued between them, of a very different tone and character from any which had taken place before. Ella was obliged to trust and to confide in him, to tell her reasons for abhorring and shrinking from the sight of one whom her evil fortune seemed continually to bring across her path, and to consult with him on the means to be employed for the purpose of concealing her presence in Ghent from Roydon's eyes, and of discovering what chance had brought him to the same city so soon after herself.

Nothing, perhaps, could have given Dyram more satisfaction than this result. The new relations which it established between Ella and himself—the opportunities which it promised of serving, assisting her, and laying her under obligations—the constant excuse which it afforded for seeing her, and consulting with her on subjects of deep interest to herself—were all points which afforded him much gratification. But that was not all: he fancied that he saw the means of obtaining a power over her—a

command as well as an influence. Vague schemes presented themselves to his mind of entangling her in a chain that she could not break — of binding her to himself by ties that she could not shake off — and of using the haughty and vicious knight, whose character he easily estimated, from the information now given him by Ella, as a tool for the accomplishment of his own purposes. I have said that these schemes were vague; and perhaps they might never have taken any more definite a form, had not other events occurred which led him to carry them out almost against his own will. Man, in the midst of circumstances, is like one in a Dædalian labyrinth, where a thousand paths are ready to confound him, a thousand turnings to lead him to the same end, and that end disappointment; while but one, of all the many ways, can reach the issue of success.

That night, soon after sunset, Dyrham stood before the gate of the Dominican monastery, and, ringing the bell, asked the porter for the lodging of Sir Simeon of Roydon. It was evident to him that orders had been given for

his admission, for, without any enquiry, he was immediately shown to a small chamber, where he found the knight alone. A curious contest of the wits then ensued, for the knight was shrewd, and had determined, if it were within the scope of possibility, to gain from Ned Dyrham all the information he could afford; and Dyrham, on the contrary, had resolved to give none but that which suited his purpose. Both were keen and cunning men; neither very scrupulous; each selfish in a high degree, though in a somewhat different line; and both eager and fiery in pursuit of their objects.

The first question of the knight to Ned Dyrham was, what had brought him to Ghent.

“I came hither,” he replied at once, “with Master Richard of Woodville.”

The knight’s brow was covered by a sudden cloud, and he demanded in a sharp tone, “Is he here now?—Are you his servant, then?”

“He is not here now,” answered the man: “he has gone on with the Count de Charolois, and did not think fit to take me with him any further.”

“Then you are out of employment?” asked the knight.

“For the present, I am,” said Ned Dyram; “but I shall soon find as much as I want. I am never at a loss, sir knight.”

“That is lucky for yourself,” replied Simeon of Roydon, and then abruptly added, “Will you take service with me?”

“No!” answered Dyram bluntly. “I will take service with no one any more. I was not meant for a varlet. I can do better things than be the serving-man of any knight or noble.”

“What can you do?” demanded Roydon, with a somewhat sarcastic smile.

“What can I not?” exclaimed Dyram. “I can read better than a priest—write better than a clerk. I can speak languages that would make your ears tingle, without understanding what you heard. I can compound all essences and drugs; I can work in gold, silver, or iron; and I know some secrets that would well nigh raise the dead.”

“Indeed!” said the knight. “Then you must be a monk, or a doctor of Oxford.”

"Neither," replied the man; "but I see you disbelieve me. Shall I give you a proof of what I can do?"

"Yes," answered Sir Simeon; "I should like to see some spice of your skill."

"In what way shall it be?" asked Ned Dyam. "If you will order up some charcoal, with this little instrument and these pinchers I will make you a chain to go round your wrist out of a gold noble; or, if there be a Greek book in the monastery, I will read you a page therefrom, and expound it, in the presence of whom you will, as a judge; for well I wot you yourself know nothing about it."

"Nor wish to know," replied the knight; "but I will have neither of these experiments; the one would be too long, the other too tedious.—You said that you had secrets that would well nigh raise the dead. I have heard of such things, and I should like to see them tried."

"Would you not be afraid?" asked Ned Dyam.

"No! —Why?" answered Sir Simeon of Roydon. "The dead cannot hurt me."

"Assuredly," said Ned Dyram; "but yet, when we call for those who are in their graves, we can never surely tell who may come. It is not always the spirit we wish that answers to our voice; and that man's heart must be singularly free, who, in the days of fiery youth, has done no deed towards the silent and the cold, that might make him shrink to see them rise from their dull bed of earth, and look him in the face again."

"I am not afraid," said Roydon, after a moment's thought. "Do it if you can."

"Nay, I said I had secrets that would *well nigh* raise the dead," answered Ned Dyram. "I neither told you that they would, nor that I was willing."

"Ha! it seems to me you are a boaster, my good friend," exclaimed the knight with a sneer. "Can you do anything in this sort, or can you not?"

"I am no boaster, proud knight," replied Ned Dyram, in an angry tone, "and I only say what I am able to perform. 'Tis you that make it more than I ever did say; but if you would

know what I can do, I tell you I can raise the dead for my own eye, though not for yours. That last great secret I have not yet obtained; but I trust ere long to do so; and as you are incredulous, like all other ignorant men, I will give you proof this very night."

"But how shall I know, if I do not see the shapes myself?" demanded Sir Simeon of Roydon.

"I will tell you what I behold," rejoined the man, "and you must judge for yourself. Those whom I call up shall all have some reference to you. Have you a mirror there?"

"Yes," replied the knight; and while he rose to search for one, Dyram strewed some small round balls upon the table, jet black in colour, and apparently soft. The knight brought forward one of the small, round, polished mirrors of the day, which generally formed part of the travelling apparatus of both sexes in the higher class; and, setting it upright, Dyram brought each of the little balls for a single instant to the flame of the lamp, and laid them down before the mirror. A thin

white smoke, of a faint, but delicate odour, instantly rose up and spread through the room, producing a feeling of languor in those who breathed the perfume, and giving a ghastly likeness to all things round; and, kneeling down before the table, Ned Dyam gazed into the glass, pronouncing several words in a strange tongue, unintelligible to the knight. The moment after his eyes opened wide, and seemed almost starting from his head; and the knight exclaimed eagerly, "What is it you see?"

"I see," replied the man, "a gentleman in a black robe seated at a table; and he looks very sad. He is young and handsome, too, with coal-black hair curling round his brow."

"Has he no mark, by which I can distinguish him?" asked the knight.

"Yes," answered Dyam; "but it matters not for him, as I see he is amongst the living. It is the absent who generally come first, and then the dead. However, here's a scar upon his right cheek, as if from an old wound."

"Sir Henry Dacre!" murmured Roydon.

“Try again, man—try again; and let it be the dead this time.”

Dyram pronounced some more words, apparently in the same language; and then a smile came upon his countenance. “A sweet and beautiful lady!” he said.—“How proudly she walks, as if earth were not good enough to bear her! Ha! how is that?”—and, as he spoke, his face assumed a look of terror: his lip quivered, his eye stared; and the countenance of Sir Simeon of Roydon turned deadly pale.

“What do you see?” demanded the knight in a voice scarcely audible. “What do you see?”

“She walks by a stream!” cried Dyram in a terrible tone, “and the sun is just below the sky. Some one meets her, and they talk. He seizes her by the throat!—she struggles—he holds fast—he casts her into the river! Hark, how she shrieks! She sinks—she rises—she shrieks again! Oh God! some one help her!—She is gone!”

All was silent in the room for a minute;

and Ned Dyram, wiping his brow, as if recovering from some great excitement, gazed round him by the light of the lamp. Simeon of Roydon had sunk into a seat; and his face was so ashy pale, the lids of his eyes so tightly closed, that for a moment his companion thought he had fainted. The instant after, however, he murmured "Ah! necromancer!" and then starting up, exclaimed, "What horrible vision is this?—Who is it thou hast seen?"

"Nay, I know not," answered Ned Dyram. "How can I tell?—They spoke not;—'t was but a sight.—But one thing is certain, that either the man or the woman is closely allied to you in some way."

"What was he like?" demanded the knight abruptly.

"It was so dark when he came that I could not see him well," replied Dyram. "He was a tall, fair man; but that was all I saw. The lady was more clearly visible; for when she came, there was a soft evening light in the sky."

“Why, fool, it has been dark these two hours,” cried the knight.

“Not in that glass,” answered the other. “When she appeared first, it was a calm sunset, and I saw her well; but it speedily grew dark, and then I could descry nothing but her form, first struggling with her murderer, and then with the deep waters.”

“Her murderer!” repeated Simeon of Roydon—“her murderer! What was she like?”

“A vain and haughty beauty, I should say,” replied the man, “with dark hair and seemingly dark eyes, a proud and curling lip, and—”

“Enough, enough!” answered Simeon of Roydon, with resumed composure. “I know her by your description, and by the facts; but in the man you are mistaken—he was a dark man who did the deed, or suspicion belies him.”

“’Twas a fair man that I saw,” rejoined Dyram in a decided tone; “of that, at least, I am sure, though the shadows were too deep to let me view his face distinctly. Shall I look again, to see any more, sir knight?”

“No, no—it is sufficient!” cried Simeon of Roydon somewhat sharply. “I see you have not overstated what you can do. Hearken to me; I will give you employment in your own way—much or little, as you like. I would fain hear more of this girl Ella Brune—of where she is, what she is doing.—I would fain find her—speak with her; but I am discomposed to-night. This lady that you saw but now was very dear to me; her sad fate affects me deeply even now. See, how I am shaken by these memories!” And in truth his hand, which he stretched forth to lay the mirror flat upon the table, trembled so, that he nearly let it fall. “But of this girl, Ella Brune,” he continued; “have you known her long?—know you where she now is?”

“Nay; I was but sent to bear her a letter from Richard of Woodville, and to counsel her from him, to go to York,” replied Dyram. “Then, as to where she is, I cannot say exactly—not to a point, that is to say; but I can soon learn, if I am well entreated and well paid!”

“That you shall be,” rejoined the knight.
“Come to me to-morrow early, and we will talk more.—To-night I am unfit. Here is some gold for you, for what you have done.—Good night, good night !”

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENTERPRISE.

THE young Count of Charolois stood in the court-yard of the inn, about nine o'clock on the morning that followed his arrival in Lille, with a letter in his hand, and a countenance not altogether well pleased. There was a gentleman beside him, somewhat advanced in years, bearing knightly spurs upon his heels, and armed at all points but the head, the grey hair of which was partly covered with a small velvet cap, and to him the Prince spoke eagerly; while the various persons who had attended him from Ghent stood at a respectful distance, waiting his commands as to their future proceedings. Richard of Woodville had not remarked the old knight with the band before; and turning to one of

the young nobles with whom he had formed some acquaintance, he asked who he was.

“Why, do you not know?” exclaimed his companion. “That is Sir Walter, Lord of Roucq, one of our most renowned leaders. He has just arrived from Douay, they say; but the Count seems angry with that letter the courier brought him from Paris. Things are going ill there, I doubt, and we shall soon have a levy of arms. That court is full of faitours and treachers—a crop of bad corn, which wants Burgundian hands to thin it.”

“I trust that you will permit a poor Englishman to put in a sickle,” said Woodville laughing, “or at least to have the gleanings of the field.”

“Oh! willingly, willingly!” replied the young Lord, with better wit than might have been expected. “I cannot but think your good Sovereigns in England have but been hesitating till other arms have begun the harvest, in order to take full gleanings of that poor land—but see, the Count is looking round to us.”

“Harken, my Lords,” said the Count. “It is my father’s will that I should remain in Lille, while this noble knight rides on an expedition of some peril to the side of Tournay. He says the Lord of Roucq has men enough for what is wanted, and that some of you must abide with me here; but still I will permit any gentlemen to go who may choose to do so, provided a certain number stay with me; so make your election.”

The young nobles of Burgundy were rarely unwilling to take the field; but in the present instance there were two or three motives which operated to make them in general decide in favour of staying with the Count of Charolois. In the first place, they knew of no enterprise that could be achieved on the side of Tournay which offered either glory or profit. There were a few bands of revolted peasantry and brigands in that quarter, whom the Count had threatened to suppress; but such a task was somewhat distasteful to them. In the second place, they were not insensible to the fact, that by choosing to stay with the Prince, they offered him an indirect compliment, which was

especially desirable at a moment when he seemed angry at not being permitted to lead them himself; and, in the third place, the Lord of Roucq was inferior in rank to most of them, though superior in military reputation; and he was moreover known to be a somewhat strict disciplinarian, a quality by no means agreeable either to the French or Burgundian gentlemen.

“I came to serve under you, my Lord the Count,” said the young Ingram de Croy; “and if you do not go, and I am permitted to choose, where you stay I will remain.”

The old Lord of Roucq gazed at him coldly, but made no observation; and the same feeling was found general, till the Count turned with a smile to Richard of Woodville, asking his choice.

“Why, my noble Lord,” replied the young Englishman, “if I could serve you here, I should be willing enough to stay; but, as that is not the case, I had better serve you elsewhere; and wherever this good knight goes, doubtless there will be some honour to be gained under his pennon.”

Walter of Roucq still remained silent, but he did not forget the willingness of the foreign gentleman; and one very young noble of Burgundy, whose fortune and fame were yet to make, taking courage at Woodville's words, proposed to go also.

"I have but few men with me, my Lord the Count," he said, with the modesty which was affected, if not felt, by all young men in chivalrous times; "and, as you know, I have but small experience, wishing to gain which, I will, by your good leave, serve under the Lord of Woodville here, who, I think you said, had been already in several stricken fields, and was a comrade of the noble King of England."

"King Henry calls him his friend, Monsieur de Lens, in his letter to me," replied the Count, "and I know he has gained *los* in several battles, though I have been told that he was disappointed of his spurs at Bramham Moor (he did not pronounce the word very accurately); because such was the trust placed in his discretion, that he was sent to the late

King just before the fight, when no one else could be trusted."

Again Richard of Woodville marvelled to find his whole history so well known; but the Count went on immediately to add to the young Englishman's troop ten of his own men-at-arms. "You, Monsieur de Lens, brought seven, I think," he said; "so that will be some small reinforcement to your *menée*, my Lord of Roucq;" and drawing that gentleman aside, the Prince whispered to him for some moments.

"Willingly, willingly, fair sir," replied the old knight, to whatever it was he said. "God forbid I should stay any noble gentleman anxious to do doughty deeds. He shall have the cream of it; and it shall go hard if I give him not the means to win the spurs.—Monsieur de Woodville, I set out in half an hour. I will but have some bread and a cup of wine, and then am ready for your good company."

But little preparation was needed, for all had been kept ready to set out at a moment's notice. Nevertheless, in the little arrangements which took place ere they departed, there sprang up

between Richard of Woodville and the Lord of Lens what may be called the intimacy of circumstances. The young Burgundian, though brave, and well practised in the use of arms, was diffident, from inexperience, of more active and perilous scenes than the tilt-yard of his father's castle or the jousting-lists in the neighbouring town; and he was well satisfied to place himself under the immediate direction of one who, like Richard of Woodville, had fought in general engagements, and served in regular armies. He had also some dread of the Lord of Roucq, but by fusing his party into the English gentleman's band, he placed another between himself and the severe old soldier, so that he trusted to escape the harsh words which their commander was not unaccustomed to use. To Woodville, then, he applied for information regarding every particular of his conduct; how he was to place his men, where he was to ride himself, and a thousand other particulars, making his companion smile sometimes at the timidity which he had personally never known, from having been accustomed, even in boyhood,

to the troublous times and continual dangers which followed the usurpation of the throne by the first of the Lancasterian House.

While they were conversing over these matters, one of the pages of the Count of Charolois joined them from the inn, and bade the English gentleman follow him to the Prince. The Count was alone in a small bed-room up stairs, and the temporary vexation which his countenance had expressed some time before, had now quite passed away. He met Richard with a laughing countenance, and, holding out his hand to him, exclaimed, addressing him by the name he had given him ever since their first interview, "God speed you, *my friend*. These rash nobles of ours have taken themselves in; and though stern old De Roucq does not wish it mentioned, that he is going on such an errand, I would have you know it, that you may take advantage of opportunity. I love you better for going with him than staying with me, as you may well judge, when I tell you that his object is to meet my father, and guard him from Paris to Lille, if the Duke can effect his escape from the French court.

My father would not have me come ; for he is likely to be pursued, it seems ; and he says in his letter, that should mischance befall him, while I remain in Lille there will still be a Duke of Burgundy to crush this swarm of Armagnac bees, even should they sting him to death. However, you must not tell De Roucq that I have given you such tidings ; for if he knew it, he would scold me like a Nieuport fishwoman, with as little reverence as he would a horse-boy."

"I will be careful, my good Lord," replied Richard of Woodville ; "but if such be the case, had we better not have more men with us ? Six or seven and twenty make but a small band against all the chivalry of France."

"Oh ! he has got two hundred iron-handed fellows beyond the gates," replied the Prince. "But hark ! there is his voice. Quick ! quick ! you must not stay !" and hurrying down into the little square before the hostel, the young Englishman found the men drawn up, and the Lord of Roucq, with a page holding his horse, and his foot in the stirrup.

“ Ah ! you are long, sir,” said the old knight, swinging himself slowly up into the saddle. Nevertheless, Richard of Woodville was on horseback before him ; for, laying his hand upon his charger’s shoulder, he vaulted at once, armed at all points as he was, into the seat, and in another instant was at the head of his men.

“ A boy’s trick !” said the old soldier with a smile. “ Never think, young gentleman, that you can make up for present delay by after activity : it is a dangerous fancy.”

“ I know it, my good Lord,” replied Richard of Woodville ; “ but I had to speak with my Lord the Count before I departed.”

“ Well, sir, well,” answered the Lord of Roucq ; and, wheeling round his horse, he gazed over the little band, marking especially the fine military appearance, sturdy limbs, and powerful horses of the English archers, with evident satisfaction. “ Ah !” he said, “ good stuff, good stuff ! Have they seen service ?”

“ Most of them,” replied Richard of Woodville.

“They shall see more, I trust, before I have done with them,” rejoined the old knight. “Come, let us go. March!”—and, leading the way through the streets of Lille, a little in advance of the rest of the party, while Richard of Woodville and the young Lord of Lens followed side by side at the head of their men, he soon reached the gates of the city, without exchanging a word with any one by the way.

“Why, this is strange,” said the Lord of Lens to his companion, in a low voice, as they turned up towards the side of Douay, instead of taking the road to Tournay. “This is not the march that the Count said was laid out for us. The old man knows his road, I suppose?”

“No fear of that,” replied Richard of Woodville; “our business, comrade, is to follow, and to ask no questions. Perhaps there is better luck for us than we expected. Commanders do not always tell their soldiers what they are leading them to;” and turning his head as they came forth into the broad open road which

extended to Peronne, through the numerous strong towns at that time comprised in the Flemish possessions of the House of Burgundy, he gave orders, in French and English, for his men to form in a different order—nine abreast. Some little embarrassment was displayed in executing this manœuvre; and he had to explain and direct several times before it was performed to his satisfaction.

The Lord of Roucq looked round and watched the whole proceeding, but made no observation; and, after proceeding for about two miles farther on the way, Woodville again changed the order of his men, when the old commander suddenly demanded, “What are you playing such tricks for?”

“For a good reason, sir,” replied Richard of Woodville; “I have men under me who have never been accustomed to act together—my own people, those of this young Lord, and the men-at-arms of my Lord the Count. I know not how soon you may call upon us for service, or what that service may be; and it is needful they should have some practice, that they may

be alert at their work. I have learnt that in time of need, it does not do to lose even a minute in forming line."

"Ay, you Englishmen," replied the old lord, "were always better aware of that fact than we are. There would never have been a Cressy, if Frenchmen would have submitted to discipline. They will fight like devils; but each man has such an opinion of himself, that he will fight in his own way, forgetting that one well-trained man, who obeys orders promptly, is better than a hundred who do nothing but what they like themselves. Ride up and talk with me, young men; I do not see why we should not be friends together, though those satin jackets at Lille did not choose to march with old Walter de Roucq." After speaking with some bitterness of the turbulent spirit and insubordination which existed in all continental armies, the Lord of Roucq led the conversation to the military condition of England, and enquired particularly into the method, not only of training the soldiers of that country, but of educating the youths throughout the land

to the early use of arms, which he had heard was customary there.

“Ay, there is the difference between you and us,” he said, when Woodville had explained the facts to him;—“you are all soldiers; and your yeomen, as you call them, are as serviceable as your knights and gentlemen. With us, who would ever think of taking a boor from the plough, to make a man-at-arms of him? No one dares to put a steel cap on his head, unless he has some gentle blood in his veins, though it be but half a drop, and then he is as conceited of it, as if he were descended from Charlemagne.—I have charge to give you, sir, the best occasions,” he continued, still addressing Woodville, “and I will not fail; for I see you know what you are about, and will do me no discredit.”

“I beseech you, my good Lord, to let me share them with him,” said Monsieur de Lens; “I am as eager for renown as any man can be.”

“You will share them, of course, as one of his band,” replied the old soldier, “and I doubt

not, young gentleman, will do very well. I will refuse honour to no one who wins it ;” and thus conversing, they rode on as far as Pont a Marq, where they found a large body of men-at-arms waiting for the old Lord of Roucq.

Richard of Woodville remarked that they were most of them middle-aged men, with hard and weather-beaten countenances, who had evidently seen a good deal of service ; but he observed also that—probably, from the unwillingness of the Burgundian nobility to submit to anything like strict discipline—there seemed to be few persons of distinction in the corps, and not one knight but the old Lord himself. Without any pause, the whole party marched on to Douay, the young Englishman losing no opportunity of exercising his men in such evolutions as the nature of the ground permitted, and many of the old soldiers of De Roucq watching his proceedings in silence, but with an attentive and enquiring eye.

At Douay they halted for an hour and a half, to feed their horses and to take some refreshment ; and then marching on, they did not draw

a rein again till Cambray appeared in sight. Here all the party expected to remain the night; for Cambray, as the reader well knows, is a good day's march from Lille, especially for men covered with heavy armour, and for horses who had to carry not only the weight of their masters and their masters' harness, but steel manefaires, testières, and chanfrons of their own. The orders of the commander, however, showed them before they entered the gates, that such repose was not to fall to their lot, for he directed them to seek no hostel, but to quarter themselves, without dividing, in the market-place, and there to feed their beasts.

" 'Tis a fine evening," he said, "and you shall have plenty of food and wine; but we must march on, for an hour or two, at night, that we may be in time to-morrow. If we have more space than enough in the morning, why the destriers will be all the fresher."

No one ventured to make any reply, though the men-at-arms of the Count of Charolois felt somewhat weary with their unwonted exertion, and would fain have persuaded themselves that

their beasts could go no farther that night. Their leader, or vintner, who held the rank of a sergeant of the present day, and usually commanded twenty men, went so far as to hint his opinion on this subject to Richard of Woodville; but the young Englishman stopped him in an instant, replying coldly, "If your horses break down we must find you others. We have nothing to do but to obey."

The young Englishman took care, however, that the chargers of his whole party should have everything that could refresh them, and he spared not his own purse to procure for them a different sort of food from that which was provided for the rest. The crumb of bread soaked in water was a favourite expedient with the English of that day, as it is now with the Germans, for restoring the vigour of a wearied horse; and he made bold to dip the bread in wine, which, on those beasts that would take it, seemed to produce a very great effect.

After halting for two hours, the march was renewed; and, wending slowly onward, they reached the small town—for it was then a

town—of Gonlieu, having accomplished a distance of nearly eighteen leagues. It was within half an hour of midnight when they arrived, and the good people of the place had to be roused from their beds to provide them with lodgings ; but a party of two hundred men-at-arms was not in that day to be refused anything they might think fit to require ; and, in the different houses and stables of the town, they were all at length comfortably housed.

Richard of Woodville was not one of those men who require long sleep to refresh them after any ordinary fatigue ; and though, with the care and attention of an Arab, he spent a full hour in inspecting the treatment of his horses before he lay down to rest, yet, after a quiet repose of about four hours and a half, he awoke, and instantly sprang from the pallet which had been provided for him. He then immediately roused the young Lord of Lens, who, with five or six others, slept in the same chamber ; but the poor youth gazed wildly round him, at first seeming to have forgotten where he was ; and it required a hint from his English

friend, that the old Lord of Roucq was a man likely to be up early in the day, ere he could make up his mind to rise.

Woodville and his companion had been in the stable about five minutes, and were just setting the half-awakened horse-boys to their work, when a voice was heard at the open door, saying, "This is well!—this is as it should be!" and, turning round, they saw the figure of the old knight moving slowly away to the quarters of another party.

In an hour more, they were again upon the road; but their march was this day less fatiguing; and Woodville remarked that their veteran leader seemed to expect some intelligence from the country into which they were advancing; for at each halting-place he caused enquiries to be made for messengers seeking him, and more than once stopped the peasantry on the road, questioning them strictly, though no one clearly seemed to understand his drift. He seemed, too, to be somewhat undecided as to his course, and talked of going on to Orvillers, or at least to Conchy; but he halted for the

night, however, at Tilloloy, and quartered his men in that village and St. Nicaise.

Woodville and his party were lodged in the latter, where also the old commander slept; but about three in the morning the young Englishman was roused by voices speaking, followed by some one knocking at a neighbouring door; and, half-raised upon his arm, he was listening to ascertain if possible, what was the cause of this interruption of their repose, when the door of the room was opened, as far as the body of one of the English yeomen, who slept across it, would permit.

“Halloo! Master Woodville,” said the voice of the Lord of Roucq. “Up and to horse—your beasts are not broken down, I trust.”

“They have had time to rest since six last night,” replied Woodville, “and will be found as fresh as ever, for they feed well.”

“Like all true Englishmen,” answered the old soldier. “Join me below in a minute; I have something to say to you.”

Dressing himself, and giving hasty orders for the horses to be fed and led out, the young

Englishman went down to the ground-floor, where everything was already in bustle, and perhaps in some confusion. The Lord of Roucq was surrounded by several of his own officers, and was giving them orders in the sharp tones of impatience and hurry.

“Ha! Sir Englishman,” he exclaimed, as he saw Woodville, “how long will it take you to be in the saddle?”

“Half an hour,” replied Richard of Woodville.

“And these men want two hours!” cried the old leader. “Well, hark ye!”—and leading Woodville aside, he whispered, “’Tis as well as it is: there will be no jealousy. Get your horses out with all speed, and you shall have the cream of the affair, as I promised the young Count. You must know, I am bound to meet our good Duke at Pont St. Maxence. He makes his escape from Paris this morning; and as he brings but four men with him, I fear there may be those who will try to stop him. His plan is, to go out to hunt with the King in the forest of Hallate, and there to be met by some one

bringing him letters, as if from Flanders, requiring his hasty return. Then he will decently bid the King adieu, and ride away. I was in hopes to have had time enough to be near at hand with my whole force, to give him aid if they pursue or stay him, though he tells me in the packet just received, to meet him at Pont St. Maxence. However, it is as well that some should proceed farther; and if you can get the start of us, you can take the occasion."

"I will not miss it," replied Woodville; "but two things may be needful:—one, a letter to the Duke; and another, some one who knows the road and the forest."

"What sort of letter?" demanded De Roucq sharply. "What is the letter for?"

"To call the Duke back to Flanders," replied Richard of Woodville. "I will be the person to deliver it, should need be."

"Ay, that were as well," answered the old knight, "though doubtless he has arranged already for some one to meet him; yet, no harm of two. It shall be written as if others

had been sent before. I will call my clerk, for of writing I know nought."

"In the mean while I will see for a guide," answered Woodville; and going forth, he enquired amongst the attendants of the young Lord of Lens and the men-at-arms of the Count of Charolois, for some one who was acquainted with the forest of Hallate. One of the latter had been there in former days, and remembered something of the roads, with which amount of information, Richard of Woodville was forced to content himself, trusting to meet with some peasant on the spot who might guide him better. He then gave orders for bringing out the horses without farther delay, and for charging each saddle with two feeds of corn; and returning to the Lord of Roucq, he found him dictating a letter, by the light of a lamp, to a man with a shaven crown. Before it was finished, for the style of the good knight was not fluent, the jingle of arms and the tramp of horses' feet were heard before the inn; and looking round, with a well satisfied smile, the old soldier exclaimed, "Ha! this is well!—This is the way

to win *los*.—There, that will do, Master Peter: fold and seal it. Then for the superscription, as you know how.”

Some five minutes, however, were spent upon heating the wax, tying up the packet, and writing the address, during which time Richard of Woodville looked on with no small impatience, fearing that he might be forestalled by others in executing a task which promised some distinction. At length all was complete; and, taking the letter eagerly, he hurried out and sprang into the saddle.

The Lord of Roucq added various cautions and directions, walking by the young Englishman's horse for some way through the village; but at length he left him; and, putting his troop to a quicker pace, Woodville rode on towards Pont St. Maxence.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ACHIEVEMENT.

THE forest of Hallate—of which the great forest of Chantilly, as it is called, is in fact but an insignificant remnant—was, in the days of Philip of Valois, one of the most magnificent woods at that time in Europe, giving its name to a whole district, in the midst of which was situated the fine old palace and abbey of St. Christopher, or St. Christofle en Hallate, the scene of many of the most important transactions in French history. I do not find that the palace was much used in the reign of Charles VI.; and it was very possibly going to decay, though the abbey attached to it still remained tenanted by its monks, and the forest still afforded the sport of the chace to the French

monarchs and their court, being filled with wolves, stags, boars, and even bears (if we may believe the accounts of the time), which were preserved with more care, from all but Princely hands, than even the subjects of the Sovereign.

The great variety of the ground—the hills, the dales, the fountains, the cliffs, that the district presented—the rivers that intersected it, the deep glades and wild savannahs of the forest itself—the villages, the towns, the chapels, the monasteries, which nestled themselves, as it were, into its bosom—the profound solitude of some parts, the busy cultivation of others, the desert-like desolation of certain spots, and the soft, calm monotony of seemingly interminable trees which was to be found in different tracts—rendered the forest of Hallate one of the most interesting and changeful scenes through which the wandering foot of man could rove. Whether he sought the city or the hermitage, whether the grave or the gay, whether the sun or the shade, here he might suit his taste; and the mutations of the sky, in winter, in summer, in morning, in evening, in sunshine, or in

clouds, added new changes to each individual spot, and varied still farther a scene which in itself seemed endless in its variety.

About three o'clock on the afternoon of a day in early May, with a cool wind stirring the air, and some light vapours floating across the heaven, a gentleman, completely armed except the head, with a lance on his shoulder, and a page carrying his casque behind him, rode slowly into one of the wide savannahs, following a peasant with a staff in his hand, who seemed to be showing him the way. His horse bore evident signs of having been ridden far that day, without much time for grooms to do their office in smoothing down his dark brown coat; but nevertheless, though somewhat rough and dusty, the stout beast seemed no way tired; and, to judge by his quick and glancing eye, his bending crest, and the eager rounding of his knee, as if eager to put forth his speed, one would have supposed that he had rested since his journey, and tasted his share of corn.

“Ay, there is a piqueur of the hunt,” said the gentleman, marking with a glance a man,

clothed in green and brown, who stood holding a brace of tall dogs at the angle of one of the roads leading into the heart of the forest. "You have led us right, good fellow. There is your guerdon."

The peasant took the money; and, as it was somewhat more than had been promised, made a low rude bow and stumped away; and the gentleman, turning to his page, beckoned him up.

"Think you, Will, that you have French enough," he asked in English, when the boy was close to him, "to tell them where we are, and what to do?"

"Oh, I will make them understand," replied the page, with all the confidence of youth. "I picked up a few words in Ghent, and a few more as we came along; and what tongue won't do, hand and head must."

"Well, give me the casque," said his master, "and you take my barret;" and receiving the *chapel de fer* from the boy's hands, he placed it on his head, raised the visor till it rested against the crest, and rode slowly on towards the at-

tendant of the chase, who, with all a sportsman's eagerness, was watching down the avenue attentively.

"Good morning, my friend," said the gentleman in French.

"Good afternoon, sir," answered the piqueur; for the vulgar are always very careful to be exact in their time of day. He did not look round, however, and the stranger went on to enquire if the King were not hunting in the forest.

The man now turned and eyed the questioner. His splendid arms showed he was a gentleman; and he was alone, so that no treason could be intended. "Yes, sir," replied the piqueur; "I expect him this way every minute. Do you want to see him?"

"Why, not exactly," said the stranger. "Some of the people told me the good Duke of Burgundy was with him; and, as it is he with whom I want to speak, if their report be true, it may save me a ride to Paris."

"The good Duke is with the King," rejoined the man; "but s'life I know not whether he will

be so long; for fortune alters favour, they say, and times have changed of late—though it is no business of mine, and so I say nothing; but the Duke was ever a friend to the Commons, and to the citizens of Paris more than all.”

“Have they had good sport to-day?” demanded Richard of Woodville; for doubtless the reader has already discovered one of the interlocutors in this dialogue. “’Tis somewhat late in the year, is it not, piqueur?”

“Ay, that it is, for sundry kinds of game,” replied the man; “but there are some not out, and others just coming in; and we are obliged to suit ourselves to the poor old King’s health. He is free just now from his black sickness, and would have had a glorious day of it, had not Achille, the subveneur, who is always wrong, and always knows better than any one else, mistaken which way the *piste* lay. But hark! they are blowing the death; the beast has been killed, and not past this way, foul fall him. My dogs have not had breath to-day.”

“Then they will not come hither, I suppose?” said Richard of Woodville.

“Oh, yes! ’tis a thousand chances to one they will,” answered the man. “If they force another beast, they must quit that ground, and cross the road to Senlis; and if they return with what they have got, they must take the Paris avenue, so that in either case they will come here.”

While he spoke there was a vast howling of dogs and blowing of horns at some distance; and Woodville, trusting to the piqueur’s sagacity for the direction the Court would take, waited patiently till the sounds accompanying the *curée* were over, and then gazed down the avenue. In about ten minutes some horsemen began to appear in the road; and then a splendid party issued forth from one of the side alleys, followed by a confused crowd of men, horses, and dogs. They came forward at an easy pace, and Richard of Woodville enquired of his companion, which was the Duke of Burgundy.

“What, do you not know him?” said the man in some surprise. “Well, keep back, and I will tell you when they are near.”

The young Englishman, without reply, reined

back his horse for a step or two, so as to take up a position beyond the projecting corner of the wood; and, while the piqueur continued gazing down the avenue, still holding his dogs in the leash, Woodville turned a hasty glance behind him, to see if he could discover anything of his page. The boy was nearer than he thought, but was wisely coming round the back of the savannah, where the turf was soft and somewhat moist, so that his approach escaped both the eyes and ears of the royal attendant, till, approaching his master's side, he said something which, though spoken in a low tone, made the man turn round. At the same moment, however, the first two horsemen passed out of the road into the open space; and immediately after, the principal party appeared.

At its head, a step before any of the rest, came a man, seemingly past the middle age, with grey hair and a noble presence, but with cheeks channelled and withered, more by sickness and care than years. His eye was peculiarly clear and fine, and not a trace was to be seen therein of that fatal malady which

devoured more than one-half of his days. His aspect, indeed, was that of a person of high intellect; and though his shoulders were somewhat bowed, and his seat upon his horse not very firm, there were remains of the great beauty of form and dignity of carriage, which had distinguished the unhappy Charles in earlier days.

Close behind the King came a youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age, with a fine but somewhat fierce and haughty countenance, a cheek colourless and bare, and a bright but haggard eye; and near him rode a somewhat younger lad, of a fresher and more healthy complexion, round whose lip there played ever and anon a gay and wanton smile. Almost on a line with these, were three or four gentlemen, one far advanced in years, and one very young; while the personage nearest the spot where Richard of Woodville sat, seemed still in the lusty prime of manhood, stout but not fat, broad in the shoulders, long in the limbs, though not much above the middle height. He was dressed in high boots, and long striped hose of blue and red, with a close-fitting pourpoint of blue, and a

long mantle, with furred sleeves, hanging down to his stirrups. On his head he bore a cap of fine cloth, shaped somewhat like an Indian turban, with a large and splendid ruby in the front, and a feather drooping over his left ear. His carriage was princely and frank, his eye clear and steadfast, and about his lip there was a firm and resolute expression, which well suited the countenance of one who had acquired the name of John the Bold.

“If that be not the Duke of Burgundy,” said Richard of Woodville to the piqueur, in a low tone, as the party advanced, “I am much mistaken.”

“Yes, yes,” replied the man, nodding his head, “that is he; God bless him!—and that is the Duke of Aquitaine, the King’s son, just before him. Then there is the Duke of Bavaria on the other side—”

The young Englishman did not wait to hear enumerated the names of all the personages of the royal train, but, as soon as the King himself had passed, rode up at once to the Duke of Burgundy, who turned round and

gazed at him with some surprise, while the young pale Duke of Aquitaine bent his brow, frowning upon him with an enquiring yet ill-satisfied look.

“My Lord the Duke,” said Woodville, tendering the letter he had received from De Roucq, “I bear you this from Flanders.”

“The Duke took it, and, without checking his horse, but merely throwing the bridle over his arm, opened the letter and looked at the contents. “Ha !” he exclaimed as he read—“ha !—I thank you, sir ;” and, making a sign for Richard and his page to follow, he spurred on, and passed the two young Princes, to the side of the King.

“This gentleman, Sire,” he said, displaying the letter, “brings me troublous tidings from my poor county of Flanders, which call for my immediate presence ; and therefore, though unwilling to leave you, royal sir, at a time when my enemies are strong in your capital and court, I must even take my leave in haste ; but I will return with all convenient speed.”

The King had drawn his bridle, and, turning round, gazed from the Duke to Richard of Woodville, with a look of hesitation; but, after a moment's pause, he answered, with a cold and constrained air, "Well, Duke of Burgundy, if it must be so, go.—A fair journey to you, cousin;" and, without farther adieu, he gave a glance to his sons and rode on.

The Duke of Burgundy bowed low, and held in his horse while the royal party passed on, exchanging no very placable looks with the young Duke of Aquitaine, his son-in-law, and giving a sign to four or five gentlemen, who were following in the rear, but immediately fell out of the train, and ranged themselves around him.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the Prince, turning to Woodville, while the King and his court proceeded slowly towards a distant part of the savannah, and, by the movements of different gentlemen round the Duke of Aquitaine, there seemed to be some hurried consultation going on.

"An English gentleman, my Lord, attached

to the Count, your son," replied Woodville without farther explanation; but, seeing that a number of men completely armed, who followed the principal body of courtiers, had been beckoned up, he added, "Methinks, fair sir, there is not much time to lose.—Yonder is the way;—I am not alone." Without reply, the Duke gave one quick glance towards the royal party, set spurs to his horse, and rode quickly along the road to which Woodville pointed. He had hardly quitted the savannah, and entered the long broad avenue, however, when the sound of a horse's feet at the full gallop came behind, and a voice exclaimed, "My Lord, my Lord the Duke! the King has some words for your ear."

It was a single cavalier who approached; but the quick ear of Richard of Woodville caught the sound of other horse following—though the angle of the wood cut off the view of the royal train.

"Good faith!" answered the Duke, turning his head towards the messenger, but without stopping, "they must be kept for another

moment. My business will have no delay." But, even as he spoke, he caught sight of a number of men-at-arms following the first, and just entering the alley in a confused and scattered line.

"But you must, my Lord," exclaimed the gentleman who had just come up: "I have orders to use force!"

The Duke and his attendants laid their hands upon their swords; but Woodville raised his lance high above his head, and shook it in the air, shouting, "Ho, there! Ho!—Ride on, my Lord, ride on!—I will stay them."

"Now, gold spurs for a good lance!" cried the Duke of Burgundy, "but I will not let you fight alone, my friend;" and, wheeling his horse, he formed his little troop across the road.

"Ho, there! Ho!" shouted Woodville again; and instantly he heard a horn answering from the wood. "The first man is mine, my Lord," he cried, setting his lance in the rest and drawing down his visor. "Fall back upon our friends behind: you are unarmed!" and, spurring on

his charger at full speed, he passed the King's messenger, (who was only habited in the garments of the chase,) towards a man-at-arms, who was coming at full speed some fifty yards in advance of the party sent to arrest the Duke. His adversary instantly charged his lance likewise; no explanation was needed; and the two cavaliers met in full shock between the parties. The spear of the Frenchman struck right on Woodville's cuirass, and broke it into splinters; but the lance-head of the young Englishman caught his opponent on the gorget, and, without wavering in his seat, he bore him back over the croup to the ground. Then, wheeling rapidly, he galloped back to the Duke's side; while, at a brisk pace, but in perfect order, his band came up under the young Lord of Lens; and the English archers, springing to the ground, put their arrows to the strings and drew the bows to the ear, waiting for the signal to let fly the unerring shaft.

“Hold! hold!” cried the Duke. “Galantly done, noble sir!—you have saved me;

but let us not shed blood unnecessarily;" and, casting his eye over Woodville's troop, he added, "We outnumber them far; they will never dare attack us."

As he spoke, the men-at-arms of France paused in their advance, and some of the foremost, dismounting from their horses, raised the overthrown cavalier from the ground, and were seen unlacing his casque. At the same time, the gentleman who had first followed the Duke of Burgundy, began quietly retreating towards his friends, and though the Duke called to him aloud to stop, showed no disposition to comply.

"Shall I bring him back, noble Duke?" exclaimed the young Lord of Lens, eager to win some renown.

"Yes, ride after him, young sir," said John the Bold.

"Remember, he is unarmed," cried Richard of Woodville, seeing the youth couch his lance, and fearing that he might forget, in his enthusiasm, the usages of war.

"You are of a right chivalrous spirit, sir,"

said the Duke, turning to the young Englishman. "Do you know, my Lord of Viefville, who is that gentleman, whom he unhorsed just now?"

"The Count de Vaudemont, I think," replied the nobleman to whom he spoke. "I saw him at the head of the men-at-arms in the forest."

"Oh yes, it is he," rejoined another. "Did you not see the cross crosslets on his housings?"

"A good knight and stout cavalier as ever couched a lance," observed the Duke of Burgundy. "The young kestrel has caught the hawk," he continued, as the Lord of Lens, riding up to him of whom he had been in pursuit, brought him back apparently unwillingly towards the Burgundian party.

"Ah! my good Lord of Vertus," exclaimed John the Bold, "you have gone back with half your message.—Fie! never look white, man! We will not hurt you, though we have strong hands amongst us, as you have just seen. Offer my humble duty to the King, and tell

him that I should at once have obeyed his royal mandate to return, but that my affairs are very urgent, and that I knew not how long I might be detained to hear his royal will."

"And what am I to say to our Lord?" asked the Count de Vertus, "for Monsieur de Vaudemont, his son's bosom friend, overthrown by your people, and well-nigh killed, I fear?"

"My daughter ought to be his son's bosom friend," replied the Duke sharply, "but she is not, it seems; and as to Monsieur de Vaudemont, perhaps you had better tell the King that he was riding too fast and had a fall: it will be more to his credit than if you say, that he met a squire of Burgundy in fair and even course, and was unhorsed like a clumsy page; and now, my Lord of Vertus, I give you the good time of day. You said something about force just now; but methinks you will forget it; and so will I."

Thus saying, the Duke turned his horse and rode away down the avenue; the English archers sprang upon their steeds again; and Richard of Woodville, beckoning the young

Lord of Lens to halt, caused his whole troop to file off before him, and then with his companion brought up the extreme rear. A number of the French men-at-arms followed at a respectful distance, till the party entered the village of Fleurines, in the forest; but there, having satisfied themselves that there was no greater body of the men of Burgundy in the neighbourhood—which might have rendered the King's journey back to Paris somewhat dangerous—they halted and retired.

The Duke had turned round to watch their proceedings more than once; nor did he take any farther notice of Richard of Woodville till the French party were gone. When they were no longer in sight, however, he called him to his side, and questioned him regarding himself.

“I do not remember you about my son, fair sir,” he said, “and I am not one to forget men who act as you have done to-day.”

“I have been in your territories, my Lord Duke, but a short time,” replied Richard of Woodville. “As I came seeking occasions of

honour to the most chivalrous court in Europe, and as I was furnished with letters from my Sovereign to yourself, and to your son, vouching graciously for my faith, the Count was kindly pleased to give me a share in anything that was to be done to-day. Happening to be in the saddle this morning somewhat before the rest of the Lord of Roucq's troop, and my horses being somewhat fresher, the good old knight sent me on, thinking you might need aid before you reached the rendezvous you had given him."

"Ay, he judged right," replied the Duke, "and had I known as much, when I wrote to him, as I learned yesterday, I would have had him at the gates of Paris; for my escape at all has been a miracle. They only put off arresting me or stabbing me in my hotel till the King returned from this hunting, in order to guard against a rising of the citizens. Have you this letter from King Henry about you?"

"My page has it in his wallet, noble Duke," replied the young Englishman. "Will you please to see it?"

John nodded his head, and, calling up the boy, Richard of Woodville took the letter from him, and placed it in the Prince's hands. The Duke opened and read it with a smile; then, turning to Woodville, he said, "You justify the praises of your King, and his request shall be attended to by me, as in duty bound. Men look to him, sir, with eyes of expectation, and have a foresight of great deeds to come. His friendship is dear to me; and every one he is pleased to send shall have honour at my hands for his sake. Ah! there is Pont St. Maxence, and the bright Oise. De Roucq is, probably, there by this time."

"I doubt it not, my Lord," answered Richard of Woodville, "he could not be far behind."

"Who is that youth," demanded the Duke, "who seems your second in the band?"

"One of your own vassals, noble sir," replied the English gentleman, "full of honour and zeal for your service, who will some day make an excellent soldier.—He is the young Lord of Lens."

"Ah!" said the Duke in a sorrowful tone,

“I have bad news for him. His uncle Charles is a prisoner in Paris, taken out of my very house before my eyes; and I doubt much they will do him to death. Break it to him calmly this evening, sir.—But see! here are several of good old De Roucq’s party looking out for us;—Methinks he would not have heard bad tidings of his Duke without riding to rescue him.”

Thus saying he spurred on, meeting, ere he reached Pont St. Maxence, one or two small bodies of men-at-arms, who saluted him as he passed, shouting “Burgundy! Burgundy!” and fell in behind the band of Richard of Woodville. The single street of the small town was crowded with people; and before the doors of the two inns which the place then possessed was seen the company of the Lord of Roucq, with the men dismounted, feeding their horses, but all armed, and prepared to spring into the saddle at a moment’s notice.

The approach of the Duke was greeted by a loud shout of welcome—not alone from his own soldiers, but also from the people of the town; for in the northern and eastern provinces of

France, as well as in the capital, John the Bold was the most popular prince of the time. De Roucq immediately advanced on foot to hold his stirrup, but his Lord grasped him by the hand and wrung it hard, saying, "I am safe, you see, old friend—thanks to your care, and this young gentleman's conduct."

"Ay, I thought he would do well," replied the old soldier, "for he is up in the morning early."

"He *has* done well," said the Duke, dismounting; and, turning to Woodville, who had sprung from his horse, he said, "You rightly deserve some honour at my hands.—Though we have no spurs ready, I will dub you now; and we will arm you afterwards at Lille.—Kneel down."

Richard of Woodville bent his knee to the ground before the crowd that had gathered round; and, drawing his sword, the Duke of Burgundy addressed to him, as usual, a short speech on the duties of chivalry, concluding with the words—"Thus remember, that this honour is not alone a reward for deeds past,

but an encouragement to deeds in future. It is a bond as well as a distinction, by which you are held to right the wronged—to defend the oppressed—to govern yourself discreetly—to serve your Sovereign Lord—and to be the friend and protector of women, children, and the weak and powerless. Let your lance be the first in the fight; let your purse be open to the poor and needy; let your shield be the shelter of the widow and orphan; and let your sword be ever drawn in the cause of your King, your country, and your religion. In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I dub you Knight. Be loyal, true, and valiant.”

At each of the last words he struck him a light stroke with the blade of his sword upon the neck; and the crowd around, well pleased with every piece of representation, uttered a loud acclamation as the young knight rose; and the Duke took him in his arms, and embraced him warmly. Old De Roucq and the noblemen who had accompanied John the Bold from the forest, grasped the young Englishman’s hand one by

one; and the Duke, turning to the Lord of Lens, added, with a gracious smile, "I trust to do the same for you, young sir, ere long. In the meanwhile, that you may have occasion to win your chivalry, I name you one of my squires; and, by God's grace, you will not be long without something to do."

The youth kissed his hand joyfully; and the Duke retired to the inn. Richard of Woodville paused for a moment to distribute some handfuls of money amongst the crowd, who were crying "Largesse" around, and then followed the old Lord of Roucq, to give him information of all that had taken place in the forest of Hallate, before they proceeded together to receive the farther orders of the Duke of Burgundy.*

* Some authors, and especially Monstrelet, represent the Duke of Burgundy as effecting his escape from the forest of Villeneuve St. George; but the reader of course cannot entertain the slightest doubt that the author of the present veracious history is, like all other modern historians and critics, better acquainted with the events of distant times than the poor ignorant people who lived in them.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUMMARY.

ALL was bustle and activity throughout Flanders and Burgundy after the return of John the Bold from Paris. Night and day messengers were crossing the country from one town to another, and every castle in the land saw gatherings of men-at-arms and archers; while, across the frontier from France, came multitudes of the discontented vassals of Charles VI., pouring in to offer either service or council to the great feudatory, who was now almost in open warfare, if not against his Sovereign, at least against the faction into whose hands that Sovereign (once more relapsed into imbecility) had fallen. If, however, the country in general was agitated, much more so was the city of Lille, where the

Duke prolonged his residence for some weeks. There, day after day, councils were held in the castle; and day after day, not only from every part of the Duke's vast territories, but also from neighbouring states, came crowds of his friends and allies. The people of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres sent their deputies; the Duke of Brabant, the Bishop of Liege, the Count of Cleves, appeared in person; and even the constable of France, Waleran, Count of St. Paul, took his seat at the table of the Duke of Burgundy, and refused boldly to give up his staff to the envoys sent from Paris to demand it. The cloud of war was evidently gathering thick and black; and foreign Princes looked eagerly on to see how and when the struggle would commence; but the eyes of both contending parties were turned anxiously to one of the neighbouring Sovereigns, who was destined to take a great part, as all foresaw, in the domestic feuds of France. To Henry of England both addressed themselves, and each strove hard not only to propitiate the Monarch, but to gain the good will of the nation. All Englishmen,

either in France or Burgundy, were courted and favoured by those high in place; and Richard of Woodville was now especially marked out for honour by both the Duke of Burgundy and the young Count of Charolois. The latter opened his frank and generous heart towards one, with whose whole demeanour he had been struck and pleased from the first; and that intimacy which grows up so rapidly in troublous times, easily ripened into friendship in the daily intercourse which took place between them. They were constant companions; and more than once, after nightfall, Richard was brought by the Prince to his father's private cabinet, where consultations were held between them, not only on matters of war and military discipline—for which the young English knight had acquired a high reputation, on the report of the old Lord of Roucq—but also on subjects connected with the policy of the English Court, regarding which the Duke strove to gain some better information from the frank and sincere character of Woodville than he could obtain elsewhere. But, as we have shown, Richard of Woodville could be cautious

as well as candid ; and he replied guardedly to all open questions, that he knew nought of the views or intentions of his Sovereign ; but that he was well aware Henry of England held in high esteem and love his Princely cousin of Burgundy, and would never be found wanting, when required to show him acts of friendship. Farther, he said, the Duke must apply to good Sir Philip de Morgan, a man well instructed, he believed, in all the King's purposes.

Both the Count of Charolois and his father smiled at this answer, and turned a meaning look upon each other.

“ You have shown me, Sir Richard,” said the Duke, “ that you really do not know the King's mind on such subjects. Sir Philip de Morgan was his father's most trusted envoy, but is his own envoy not the most trusted. It is strange, your Monarch's conduct, in some things. He has added to his agents at our poor Court, a noble and wise man whom his father hated.”

“ Because, my most redoubted Lord,” replied the young knight, “ he judges differently, and is differently situated from his father. Henry IV.

snatched the crown, as all men know, from a weak and vicious King, but found that those, who once had his peers been, were not willing to be his subjects. Though a mighty, wise, and politic Prince, his life was a struggle, in which he might win victories indeed, and subdue enemies in the field, but he raised up new traitors in his own heart, new enemies within himself—I mean, my Lord, jealousies and animosities. Our present King comes to the throne by succession; and his father has left him a crown divested of half its thorns. His nurture has been different too: never having suffered oppression, he has nothing to retaliate; never having struggled with foes, he has no fear of enmity. People say in my land, that one man builds a house and another dwells in it. So is it with every one who wins a throne; he has to raise and strengthen the fabric of his power, only to leave the perfect structure to another.”

The Duke leaned his head upon his hand, and thought profoundly. Ambitious visions, often roused by the very name of Henry IV.,

were reprov'd by the moral of his life; and though John the Bold might not part with them, he turned his thoughts to other channels, and strove to learn from Richard of Woodville the character and disposition of the English Sovereign, if not his intentions and designs. On those points the young knight was more open and unreserved. He painted the monarch as he really was, laughed when the Prince spoke of his youthful wildness, and said "It was but a masking face, noble Duke, put on for sport, and, like a mummer's vizard, laid aside the moment it suited him to resume himself again. Those who judge the King from such traits as these will find themselves woefully deceived;" and he went on to paint Henry's energies of mind in terms which—though the Duke might attribute part of the praise to young enthusiasm—still left a very altered impression on the hearer's mind in regard to the real character of the English King.

I have said that these interviews took place more than once, and also that they generally took place in private; for the Duke did not

wish to excite any jealousy in his Burgundian subjects; but, on more than one occasion, several of the foreign noblemen who had flocked to the Court of Lille were present, and between the Count of St. Paul and Woodville some intimacy speedily grew up. The Count, irritated by what he thought injustice, revolved many schemes of daring resistance to the Court of France. He thought of raising men, and, as the ally of Burgundy, opposing in arms the Armagnac faction and the Dauphin: he thought of visiting England, and treating on his own part with Henry V.; and from the young English knight he strove to gain both information and assistance. There was in that distinguished nobleman many qualities which commanded esteem, and Woodville willingly gave him what advice he could; and yet he tried to dissuade him from being the first to raise the standard of revolt, pointing out that although the state of mind of the King of France, and the absence of all legal authority in those who ruled, might justify a Prince so nearly allied to the royal family as the Duke of Burgundy, in

struggling for a share of that power which he saw misused, especially as he was a sovereign Prince, though feudatory for some of his territories to the crown of France, yet an inferior person could hardly take arms on his own account without incurring a charge of treason, which might fall heavily on his head if the Duke found cause ultimately to abstain from war.

The Count listened to his reasons, and seemed to ponder upon them; and though no one loves to be dissuaded from the course to which passion prompts, he was sufficiently experienced to think well of one who would give such advice, however unpalatable at the moment.

Thus passed nearly a month from the day on which the young Englishman quitted Ghent; and so changeful and uncertain were the events of the time, that he would not venture to absent himself from the Court of Burgundy even for an hour, lest he should miss the opportunity of winning advancement and renown. In that time, however, he had gained much. He was no longer a stranger. The ways and habits of the

Court were familiar to him; he was the companion of all, and the friend of many, who, on his first appearance, had looked upon him with an evil eye; and many an occurrence, trifling compared with the great interests that were moving round, but important to himself, had taken place in the young knight's history. The ceremony of being armed a knight was duly performed, the Duke fulfilling his promise on the first occasion, and completing that which had but been begun at Pont St. Maxence. Yet this very act, gratifying as it was to one eager of honour, was not without producing some anxiety in the mind of the young Englishman. Such events were accompanied with much pageantry, and followed by considerable expense. Hitherto all his charges had been borne by himself, and he saw his stock of wealth decreasing far more rapidly than he had expected. Though apartments had been assigned to him in the Graevensteen at Ghent, none had been furnished him in the castle of Lille; and no mention was made of reimbursing him for anything he had paid.

One day, however, early in June, he was

called to the presence of the Duke, and found him just coming from a conference with the deputies of the good towns of Flanders. The Prince's face was gay and smiling; and as he passed along the gallery towards his private apartments, he exclaimed, turning towards some of his counsellors, "Let no one say I have not good and generous subjects. — Ha! Sir Richard," he continued, as his eye fell upon the young Englishman, "go to the chamber of my son—he has something to tell you."

Richard of Woodville hastened to obey; but the Count de Charolois was not in his apartment when he arrived; and some minutes elapsed before the young Prince appeared. When he came at length, however, he was followed by three or four of his men bearing some large bags, apparently of money, which were laid down upon the table in the ante-room.

"Get you gone, boys," said the Count, turning to his pages; "and you, Godfrey, see that all be ready by the hour of noon.—Now, my friend," he continued, as soon as the room was clear, "I have news for you, and, I trust,

pleasant news too. First, I am for Ghent, and you may accompany me if you will."

"Right gladly, my Lord the Count," replied Richard of Woodville, "for, to say truth, almost all my baggage is still there, and I have scarcely any clothing in which to appear decently at your father's Court. I have other matters, too, that I would fain see to in Ghent."

"Some fair lady now, I will warrant," replied the Count laughing; "I have marked the ruby ring in your basinet; but, faith, we have more serious matters in hand than either fine clothes or fair ladies. I go to raise men, sir knight, and you have a commission to do so likewise. My father would fain have you swell your company to fifty archers, taught and disciplined by your own men. The more Englishmen you can get the better, for it seems that you are famous for the bow in your land; but our worthy citizens of Bruges are not unskilful, either."

"Good faith, my Lord," replied Richard of Woodville, "I know not well how to obey the noble Duke's behest; for my riches are but

scanty, and 'tis as much as I can do to maintain my band as it is."

"Ha! are you there, my friend?" said the young Prince with a smile. "Well, you have borne long and patiently with our poverty; but the good towns have come to our assistance now, and we will acquit our debt. One of these bags is for you, and you will find it contains wherewithal to pay what you have spent, to reward your archers according to the rate of England, which is, I believe, six sterlings a day, for the month past—to pay them for three months to come, and to raise your band, as I have said, to fifty men. You will find therein, one thousand *fleurs-de-lys* of gold, or, as we call them, *franc-à-pieds*, each of which are worth about forty of your sterlings."

"Then there is much more than is needful, my good Lord," replied the young knight. "One half of that sum would suffice."

"Exactly," replied the Count; "but no one serves well the House of Burgundy without guerdon, my good friend. My father knighted you, because you had done well in arms, both

in England and in his presence; but knight-hood is too high and sacred a thing to be made a reward for any personal benefit rendered to a Prince. My father would think that he degraded that high order, if he conferred it even for saving him from death or captivity, as you were enabled to do. For that good deed, therefore, he gives you the rest; and I do trust that ere long you will have the means of winning more."

Richard of Woodville expressed his thanks, though, with the ordinary chivalrous affectation of the day, he denied all merit in what he had done, and made as little of it as possible. There was one difficulty in regard to increasing his band, however, which he had to explain to the young Count, and which arose from the promise he had given his own Sovereign, of holding himself ready to join him at the first summons. But that was speedily obviated, it being agreed that in case of his services being demanded by King Henry, he should be at liberty to retire with the yeomen who then accompanied him, and that the rest

of the troop about to be raised, should, in that case, be placed under the command of any officer the Duke might appoint.

As was then customary, a clerk was called in, and an indenture drawn up, specifying the terms on which the young knight was to serve in the Burgundian force, the number of the men-at-arms and archers which he was to bring into the field, the pay they were to receive, the arms and horses with which they were to appear, and even the Burgundian cloaks, or huques, which they were to wear. A copy was taken and signed by each party; and fortunate it was for Richard of Woodville, that the young Count suggested this precaution. The usual clauses regarding prisoners were added, reserving the persons of kings and princes of the blood from those whom the young knight might put to ransom as his lawful captives; but the Count specifically renounced his right to the third of the winnings of the war, which was not unusually reserved to the great leader with whom any knight or squire took service.

All these points being settled, Richard of Woodville hurried back to the inn, called the Shield of Burgundy, where he and his men were lodged, and prepared to accompany the Count to Ghent. When he returned to the Castle, with his men mounted and armed, he found the court-yard full of knights, nobles, and soldiery, all ready to set out at the appointed hour ; and for a time he fancied that the young Prince might be going to Ghent with a larger force than the good citizens, jealous of their privileges, would be very willing to receive ; but, as soon as the trumpet sounded, and the whole force marched out over the drawbridge into the streets of Lille, the seven or eight hundred men, of which the party consisted, separated into different bands, and each took its own road. One pursued its way towards Amiens, another towards Tournay, another towards Cassel, another towards Bethune, another towards Douay ; and the Count and his train, reduced to about a hundred men, rode on in the direction of Ghent, which city they reached about four o'clock upon the following day.

Except the Lord of Croy, between whom and the young Englishman a good deal of intimacy had arisen, the Count de Charolois was accompanied by no other gentleman of knightly rank but Richard of Woodville; and, as that high military station placed him who filled it, on a rank with princes, those two gentlemen were the young Count's principal companions on the road to Ghent, and received from him a fuller intimation of his father's designs and purposes than had been communicated to them before they quitted Lille. All seemed smiling on the fortunes of Richard of Woodville; the path to wealth and renown was open before him, and he might be pardoned for giving way to all the bright visions and glowing expectations of youth.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FRIEND ESTRANGED.

TRUMPET and timbrel were sounding in the streets of Ghent; the people, in holiday costume, were thronging bridge and market-place; the procession of the trades was once more afoot, with banners displayed; the clergy were hurrying here and there with cross and staff, and all the ensigns of the Romish Church. It was a high holiday; for the young Count had given notice, immediately on his arrival, that he would be ready an hour before compline, which may be considered about six o'clock in the evening, to receive the honourable corps of the good town, in order to return them thanks, in the name of his father, for the liberal aid they had granted him in a time of need; and flushed with loyalty to their Prince—well, I wot, a

somewhat unusual occurrence—and with a full sense of their own meritorious sacrifices, each man pressed eagerly to be one of the deputies who were to wait upon the Count; and, if that might not be, to go, at least, as far as the palace gates with those who were to be admitted.

All the nobles who had accompanied the Count from Lille were present in the great hall of the Cours des Princes, where the reception was to take place, except, indeed, Richard of Woodville. He, soon after he had arrived, had begged the Count's excuse for absenting himself from his train; and, hurrying to the inn where he had left Ned Dyram, with his horses and baggage, he dismounted from his charger, and cast off his armour.

To his enquiries for his servant, the host replied, that he had not been there since the morning, and, indeed, seldom appeared all day; but Woodville seemed to pay little attention to this answer; and, merely washing the dust from his face and neck, set out at a hurried pace on foot.

He thought that he knew the way to the place which he intended to visit well, though

he had only followed it once; and passing on, he was soon out of the stream of people that was still flowing on towards the palace. But he found himself mistaken in regard to his powers of memory: long, tortuous streets, totally deserted for the time, lay around him; tall houses, principally built of wood, rose on every side, throwing fantastic shadows across the broad sunshine afforded by the sinking sun; and when he at length stopped a workman to ask his way, the man spoke nothing but Flemish, and all that Woodville had acquired of that tongue was insufficient to make the artizan comprehend what was meant.

Leaving him, the young knight walked on, guided by what he remembered of the direction in which the house of Sir John Grey lay; for it is hardly needful to tell the reader that thither his steps were bent, when suddenly a cavalcade of some five or six horsemen appeared, coming at a slow pace up the street; and the tall graceful figure of a man somewhat past the middle age, but evidently of distinguished rank, was seen at their head. The garb was changed; the whole

look and demeanour was different; but even before he could see the features, Richard of Woodville recognized the very man he was seeking, and, hurrying on to meet him, he advanced to his horse's side.

Sir John Grey gazed on him coldly, however, as if he had never seen him before; and Woodville felt somewhat surprised and mortified, not well knowing whether the old knight's memory were really so much shorter than his own, or whether fortune, with Mary's father, had possessed the power it has over so many, to change the aspect of the things around, and blot out the love and gratitude of former days, as things unworthy of remembrance.

"Do you not know me, Sir John Grey?" he asked: "if so, let me recal to your good remembrance Richard of Woodville, who brought you tidings from the King, and also some news of your sweet daughter."

"I know you well, sir," replied the knight; "would I knew less. I hear you have acquired honour and renown in arms. God give you grace to merit more. I must ride on, I fear."

His manner was cold and distant, his brow grave and stern; but Woodville was not one to bear such a change altogether calmly, though, for his sweet Mary's sake, he laid a strong constraint upon himself.

"I know not, Sir John Grey," he said, "what has produced so strange a change in one, whom I had thought steadfast and firm: whether calmer thought and higher fortunes than those in which I first found you, may have engendered loftier views, or re-awakened slumbering ambition, so that you regret some words you spoke in the first liberal joy of renewed prosperity; but ——"

"Cease, sir, cease!" exclaimed the old knight. "I should indeed regret those words, could they be binding in a case like this. Steadfast and firm I am, and you will find me so; but not loftier views or re-awakened ambition has made the change, but better knowledge of a man I trusted on a fair seeming. — But these things are not to be discussed here in the open street, before servants and horseboys. You know your own

heart—you know your own actions; and if they do not make you shrink from discussing what may be between you and me—”

“Shrink!” cried Richard of Woodville vehemently. “Why should I shrink?—shrink from discussing ought that I have done? No, by my knighthood!—not before all the world, varlets or horseboys, princes or peers—I care not who hears my every action blazoned to the day.”

“But I do, sir,” replied Sir John Grey, “for the sake of those dear to us both—for your good uncle’s sake, and for my child’s.”

“You are compassionate, Sir John!” said Woodville bitterly; but then he added—“yet no; you are deceived. I know not how, or by whom, but there is some error, that is very clear. This I must crave leave to say, that I am fearless of the judgment of mortal man on ought that I have done. Sins have we all to God; but I defy the world to say, that I have failed in honour to one man on earth.”

“According to that worldly code of honour we once spoke of, perhaps not,” replied Sir John Grey.

“According to what fastidious code you will,” said the young knight. “I stand here willing, Sir John Grey, to have each word or deed sifted like wheat before a cottage door. I know not your charge, or who it is that brings it; but I will disprove it, whatever it be, when it is clearly stated, and will cram his falsehood down his throat whenever I know his name who makes it.”

“Ha, sir! Is it of me you speak?” demanded the knight somewhat sharply.

“No, Sir John,” replied Woodville, “you are to be the judge; for you,” he added, with a sorrowful smile, “hold the high prize. But it is of him who has foully calumniated me to you; for that some one has done so I can clearly see; and I would know the charge and the accuser—here, now, on this spot—for I am not one to rest under suspicion, even for an hour.”

“You speak boldly, Sir Richard of Woodville,” answered Sir John Grey, “and, doubtless, think that you are right, though I may not; for I am one who have long lived in solitude, pondering men’s deeds, and weigh-

ing them in a nicer balance than the world is wont to use. However, as I said before, this is no place to discuss such things; but as it is right and just that each man should have occasion to defend himself, I will meet you where you will, and when, to tell you what men lay to your charge. If you can then deny it, and disprove it, well. I will not speak more here. See!—some one seeks your attention.”

“Whatever it is that any man on earth accuses me of,” replied the young knight, without attending to Sir John Grey’s last words, “I am ready ever to meet boldly, for my heart is free. As you will not give me this relief I ask even now, it cannot be too soon. I will either go with you at once to your own house—”

“No, that must not be,” cried the other hastily.

“Or else,” continued Woodville, “I will meet you two hours hence in the hostel called the Garland on the market-place.—What would you, knave?” he added, turning suddenly upon some one who had more than once pulled his sleeve from behind, and beholding Ned Dyram.

“ I would speak with you, instantly, sir knight,” replied Dyram, “ on a matter of life and death.”

“ Shall it be so, sir ? ” Richard of Woodville continued, looking again to Sir John Grey, who repeated thoughtfully, “ In two hours—”

“ Sir, will you listen to me ? ” exclaimed Dyram, in great agitation. “ Indeed you must. There is not a moment to lose. I tell you it will bear no delay. If you would save her life, you must come at once.”

“ Her life ! ” cried Woodville, in great surprise. “ Whose life ? Of whom do you speak, man ? ”

“ Of whom ?—of Ella Brune, to be sure,” replied Dyram. “ If you stay talking longer, you leave her to death.”

Sir John Grey, with a bitter smile, shook his bridle, and, striking his heel against his horse’s flank, rode on.

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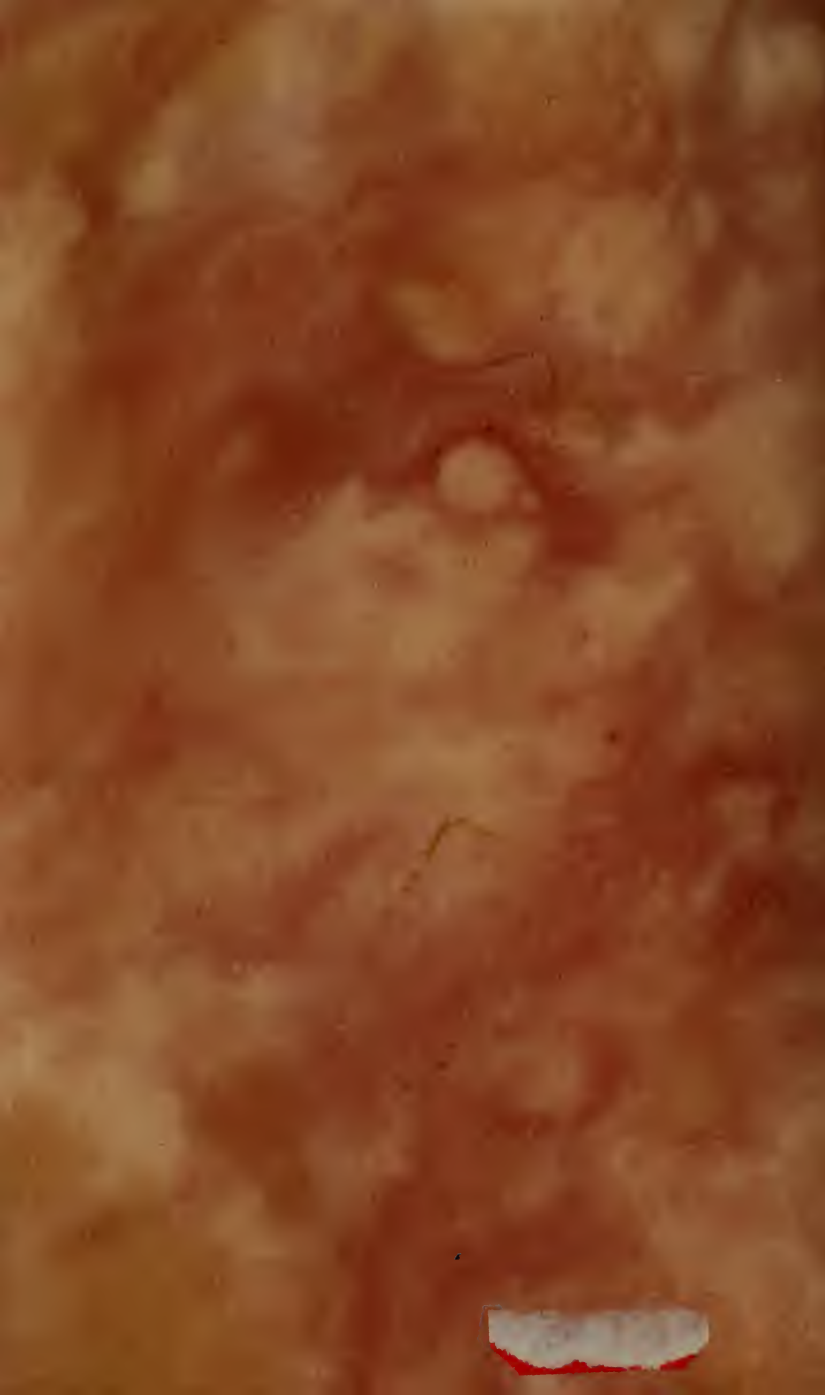
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